

WHAT DO JAPANESE STUDENTS THINK IS WRONG WITH EDUCATION?

By

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A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College

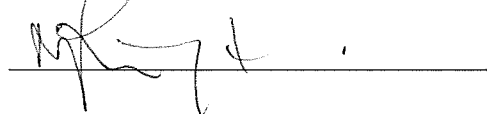
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Abstract

Due to how egregiously they have neglected their students, perhaps, one of the most dysfunctional systems of education today, belong to Japan. After World War II, Japan had to rebuild as fast as possible and thus had little choice in devising a system of education. After rigorously adopting the American system, Japan managed to make a full economic recovery during the manufacturing boom of the 1970s. Today, however, there is a technology and information boom and despite education undergoing transformation, Japan has done either a poor or deliberate job of not responding.

Through this thesis/research project, I am responding with the question, 'what do Japanese students think is wrong with education?' Unlike the typical top-down, administrative approach often employed to consider educational reform, I am instead directly concerned with student opinions. I first establish why this topic is relevant to me and then state my purpose. I place the matter into the context of prior research through a literary review and next, describe my methodology. I also present survey data obtained while studying abroad in Japan for analysis and discussion. I conclude with a glimpse of what a student focused education system of the future might look like.

INTRODUCTION / STATEMENT OF RELEVANCE:

Education today is broken, but what people experience day to day often leads them to believe otherwise. Regardless of what country we come from, how we acquire information impacts every aspect of life. Everything we come to know about our reality has been learned at some point or another. Thus, how efficiently or inefficiently people learn is immediately apparent and appears to be working as intended. However, education has another form that is more often referred to as school or University. Because education is so crucial for an individual's livelihood, it is equally, if not, more important for the governments who manage and maintain those individuals. As the world has become industrialized, education has also shifted from the aforementioned historically intuitive and organic process, to the highly institutionalized, rigid and structured system seen today. An educated citizenry is necessary for a healthy society which, in turn, leads to healthy economy. So the governments of the world are highly invested in keeping their citizens educated.

Ultimately, most of the technological advances that have economic consequences can be traced indirectly or directly to universities, either through the training provided, the knowledge spillovers, or the actual research conducted or through UILs [University-Industrial Links] that enabled firms and faculty members to collaborate in the development of technologies (Yusuf 9).

Because of how an educated and innovative population can advance industry and contribute economically to their country, the policy makers and administrations are highly interested in the management of education. "National and sub-national governments are the principal architects of the national innovation strategy. They set parameters for higher education, and they craft the incentive mechanisms as well as the institutions that influence business

decisions" (Yusuf 15). Of course, any government is going to want to control their economy as best they can. With education and economy so intertwined, governments do everything they can to influence education and by extension, the economy, in every way possible. Unfortunately, this too often comes at the expense of the students.

When many of these systems of education across the world were put in place, access to information came mostly linearly; either through books, articles or a lecturer. Even as early as 30 years ago, people had very limited means to accessing and processing information. Accordingly, pedagogy was similarly limited. The education that came out of this one dimensional paradigm largely catered to one type of learner. Although that may have been sufficient at the time, the onset of the information age has enabled unprecedented access to information and people are adapting this new information abundant environment.

Many have naturally developed new ways to cope with the onslaught of data that we are now exposed to daily. And as a result, they have developed new ways of learning. Though information obtained via the likes of the internet is not commonly referred to as education, it is closer to the most naturally intuitive of education than most anything seen in most University classrooms. Internet users are empowered to explore subjects, ideas, topics, etc. at their own individual pace. There is no limitation attached to an author's bias, nor to a lecturer's preference. Because of technology, students can inquire further or inquire elsewhere based around their interests. However, these developments are being mostly ignored by obsolete systems of education across the world.

When the world was changing and growing at a much slower pace, education, it did not require a rapid pace of evolution. Recently however, technology has been quickly transforming the way people and economies alike, communicate and learn. Though this transforming has been

hurting economies, as many have been in decline recently, most industrialized nations don't appear to be concerned with adapting to these technological changes. There is more to consider, but one large factor for this decline is an obsolete system of education. If economies and education are linked, then the decline of one implicates the other.

From an economic or business perspective, many countries have limited resources with which they can budget towards various areas like education. In these terms, education can be considered an investment. The governing body places money into educational infrastructure with the hope that people develop and succeed within that system and, eventually, return that investment through their contributions to industry, society etc. If people are underperforming, then businesses will reflect a poor economy and the nation overall will suffer. On the hand, if a society is performing well, industries are innovating, technology is improving and businesses are profiting, then there is no good business reason to invest any further money or effort into changing anything. And in some cases, if industry is innovating or an economy is prospering, then educational funding might actually get reduced.

The world and more specifically, the United States, is in a peculiar situation where technology and the internet continues to change society and the economy, but the education has not changed. Many countries are still employing education systems tailored to an outdated manufacture based industry. One reason the governments of the world have not invested in changing their systems of education is because the internet revolution has enabled innovation and thus, limited economic successes, to occur despite an outmoded system of education. These governments are reaping new benefits from the same educational investment, so from a business perspective what incentive do they have to improve or change anything? Countries like the US

and Japan have become too comfortable with the strategy of using education as more of a training tool than a way to provide opportunities to as many students as possible.

Universities are losing their grip on higher learning as the Internet is, inexorably, becoming the dominant infrastructure for knowledge - both as a container and as a global platform for knowledge exchange between people - and as a new generation of students requires a very different model of higher education. [...] The transformation of the university is not just a good idea. It is an imperative, and evidence is mounting that the consequences of further delay may be dire" (Tapscott in Jones 33).

Because the nature of the internet provides anyone the ability to explore any interest at their own pace the modern day student is developing ways of negotiating information that are often diametrically opposed to how things are taught in the typical classroom. These new types of students, more than ever, have room with which to develop according to their own personal desires. If a student wants to learn about some topic, they can 'Google' search it or enter it into any other search engine, and be afforded effectively an infinite amount of resources and information. This applies to many topics. No longer is the access to information limited to the means by which the information is delivered. However, governments are not responding to these changes. "By shifting our attention to the ways in which technologies open up the potential for new kinds of social engagement, the argument moves towards choice and the new ways in which technologies might allow for new kinds of educational engagement" (Jones, 43).

These personalities are not being given avenues to succeed in alternative ways. And problems are becoming the result, "Since the mid-1970s observers have noted several problems. They include violent behavior, juvenile crime, bullying, a decline in students' academic motivation, and, in some cases, a refusal to attend school" (Watanabe 229).

There are a multitude of problems when it comes to ways in which the government has failed when it comes to education. There is so much that goes into what curricula are chosen, what students get accepted and how teachers get hired, etc. There is so much focus on those inner workings that often times, those who are meant to benefit most from education, the students are often left out of the discussion. There is so much that goes into these high levels discussions and decisions that there is little room left to discuss the desires of the students. But with this new type of student becoming more present, the attention must shift to their needs. Governments must to start paying attention to the interests and academic desires of a new base of students in this internet age. Otherwise, it will spell certain doom in the long run.

Alternative learners have always been around but because of the way the internet has changed economy and communication, there are more of these students than ever. "Children today are growing up amid an affluence that is in stark contrast to the economic reality of previous generations. The consumer orientation of today's young people is a far cry from their counterparts of the postwar era" (Furuto 279). Closed form classes are composed lectures, slides, correct or incorrect answers, with little room for analysis, interpretation and interaction. These are opposed to more open ended learning environments where students have more freedom to make mistakes, work towards an answer and engage in open discussion. In the past, closed ended learning environments were the most efficient way to train people and get them contributing to the economy. This was especially true of Japan after World War II.

After World War II, Japan was forced to overhaul its entire infrastructure, including education. Japan had lost so much but after the war they found themselves in a position where they had to rebuild rapidly. "When Japan surrendered to the Allies in August 1945, the United States was charged with assisting in the development of a new educational system" (Beauchamp

in Furuto 276). In spite of the devastation caused by their tragic defeat, they remarkably bounced back and are now one of the most powerful countries in the world. In a manufacturer's dominated global environment at the time, Japan employed a very rigid and vertically aligned educational system that taught people skills so they could quickly turn around and help rebuild Japan.

Not only did they rebuild Japan but Japans' strategy would later yield benefits. They got their infrastructure back up and running and their new expertise soon extended to other industries. They had great successes in manufacturing products like automobiles, electronics and technology. This propelled them to the position they now hold as one of the world's strongest economies. And it was largely a product of a tailored system of education. The problem now is that despite the world changing so much due to the internet revolution, Japan's education system has not changed. The Internet is changing the way we learn, share, communicate and express. "Education is rapidly falling behind the times because vested interests protect the status quo, because idealists oppose reforms which have no possibility of being implemented" (Beauchamp in Furuto 278) The fact that Japan's education has remained stagnant, and in turn, their economy has similarly remained stagnant is evidence that their education is struggling to keep up with a rapidly changing education and economy.

The educational system of Japan from time to time still receives a lot of praise. It took a great deal for them to climb out of the hole that the defeat in World War II placed them in. Many attribute that triumph to their system of education. That point is hard to argue, but despite the drastic changes the world has seen over the last fifteen to twenty years, there is a contingency of researchers that still believe in "the 'superiority' of Japanese students over other societies" (Stevenson in Reynolds 248). Aside from their recovery from World War II and their economy over the last three decades, evidence for this superiority can be found in their high global

rankings in Mathematics and Science, among others. These students may be doing well performing procedural tasks, but educational value of the future will be placed more heavily in innovation and creativity, both of which Japan, not only lacks, generally speaking, but more importantly, has not been doing enough to improve upon.

A 2006 statement from the MEXT explained that they "change the Course of Study about every ten years. But the truth is that ten years is too short a time to change classroom education. [...] So we make major changes in the Course of Study only every twenty" (MEXT in Furuto 293). Since the education system of Japan began in a sensitive position as being in accurately translated from the American system, this slow pace of educational awareness can serve to protect Japan and their educational goals. Perhaps more worrisome however, is that while Japan plays it safe, the rest of the world is rapidly changing, innovating and evolving beyond these old industrial paradigms of education. No one can fault Japan for making the best of their situation after the World War II. They went from near total annihilation to a top 3 economy over the last 35 years. But now it's time to evolve again. And the change must start from within with the students.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

Thus, my thesis is concerned with this next generation of tech-savvy students. With so much to consider regarding education I am specifically interested in how higher education in Japan is perceived by the students that participate therein. As important as these educational institutions are, they are nothing without their students. Taking into account the aforementioned issues surrounding around education, instead of analyzing things macroscopic aspects like economic policy and bureaucracy and GDP none of which has much to do directly with actual learning and obtaining information, I took a more microscopic approach. I set out to investigate

what students themselves think about their educational systems. What do Japanese students think is wrong with education?

In order to not only consider, what I feel is, the most important but also most under represented part of this educational machine, but also to try and more clearly highlight the strengths and weaknesses present within, I chose to focus my analysis around the students themselves and what they feel about their educational experiences.

Because the world is more of a global community than ever before I decided to conduct this analysis via a cross cultural comparison. Also because education today is so heavily contingent upon economics, I felt it appropriate to base this analysis around two of the most economically powerful countries over the last three decades, the United States and Japan. Prior to 2010, the number 1 and 2 economies in the world who now sit at number 1 and 3, the United States and Japan, respectively, are among the most educated in the world. Though the main focus is Japanese education, I will also place these matters into an international context and compare opinions of Japanese University students to those of some American University students in an attempt to highlight some outstanding flaws in either. However, there is a large discrepancy between how education is being provided and how students feel about their respective system of education today.

By recognizing the ways in which people adapt and assimilate to the current paradigm of academic life, a divide between education and learning, or education and school becomes apparent. There is enough overlap to suggest that not enough people acknowledge the difference. It starts with the idea of learning; everything each of us knows about our reality and day to day life reflects the basic elementary act is learning. Then there is the institution of school where

pupils enroll in an institution for instruction in various subjects. The term education often refers to both of these ideas but they are also, too often, very different things.

With school often comes politics, bureaucracy, finances, budgets, etc., all of which serve to obstruct learning. There are a number of things students must do besides study to succeed academically can and too often, in fact, these things are at odds with the pure act of learning. If learning is the purest form of obtaining information in any aspect of life, then education is the learning we do under the institution of school. The educational institutions of Japan as well as most of industrialized world are not set up, necessarily, for the students to learn. They are set up for the people to learn tasks in order to, in turn, fuel the economy. "Since the Meiji restoration of 1868, Japan's political leaders had consciously used education as an instrument to advance the ends of the state, which included economic development, national integration, and military power and conquest" (Furuto 277).

Though originating from the nineteenth century, this is the perspective Japan maintained on education right up until the end of World War II. And even thereafter, despite being forced to adopt the American system, they could not immediately throw out all of their methods from nearly a hundred years prior for something ill suited to their way of life. "As research has shown, [...] many of these reforms, such as coeducation, comprehensive schools, and local control, were deeply rooted in the U.S. democratic model but were dysfunctional when transported to the Japanese context (Beauchamp in Furuto 277) Japan was forced down a certain educational path after World War II and at no point attempted to look back and check if their strategy was still relevant. The effect of this cultural mistranslation, of sorts from over fifty years ago, lingers on and contributes to the discrepancy between the old and new types of learners.

The internet is creating a new type of learner that is not being well accounted for. "There is a need for both a new type of digital literacy for mobile media, as well as global literacy for moral and cosmopolitan issues, beyond the dichotomies between online and offline and the local and the global" (Jones 80). In other words, the internet is creating an entirely new type of education that is necessary for any citizen of the now transnational integrated world we live in.

There is not enough being done to take advantage of our current access to information. The world is ever at our fingertips and we have more access to the lessons of our neighbors more than ever before. But neither Japan nor the US is doing enough to learn from one another.

The absence of cross national perspectives and relationships between school effectiveness researchers, the neglect of internationally based research on educational achievement and the lack of interaction within societies with the comparative education discipline are all features of the present state of the school effectiveness discipline that must be seen as increasingly proving intellectually costly" (Reynolds 233).

Though some progress has been made in the field since Reynolds' statement, there is still much room to learn and improve. My goal is to fill in some of those gaps with my own survey and analysis.

This difference between learning and schooling is only one lens through which to observe the many problems in education. There are countless issues encompassing the instruction, distribution, evaluation, etc. of education across the world. But one of the issues that I think is central to most of them is how far removed the administrative decisions regarding education have become from the students on whose behalf these decisions are supposedly being made. Students are changing so rapidly but the institutions are very slowly, if at all, adjusting to these

changes to provide students new avenues for academic success. There are a multitude of potential reasons for this lag, but it more than likely is mostly due to the economy.

It has become ever more clear that education cannot be understood without recognizing that nearly all educational policies and practices are strongly influenced by an increasingly integrated international economy that is subject to severe crises: that reforms and crises in one country have significant effects in others (Apple 222-223).

It is therefore important to recognize that while my main focus is the Japanese education system, its existence with respect to that of the United States' education, for many reasons, must also be considered. So in attempt to provide a slightly more full picture, after initially analyzing Japanese students' opinions, I will also briefly analyze responses from American students as well in order to not only fill out a larger frame of reference but also to hopefully highlight any similarities or differences in weaknesses or strengths. Perhaps, this might provide some insight into potential directions Japanese education and American education alike can pay attention to moving forward.

Therefore, I gathered opinions from Japanese University and American University students because they are the core of what education is about. Because the students are so invaluable I think energy should be diverted away from filtering students through a system that only serves the economy, and instead more attention should be directed towards appealing to their rapidly changing needs. Tapscott and Williams agree that the most important change that needs to be made to the current global educational paradigm must revolve around "the value created for the main customers of the university (the students)" (Tapscott and Williams 18). So I created a survey and administered it to Japanese University students to try and analyze the problems with education as they perceive them. Before completely circumventing them, I will

places some of the deeper seeded issues into the context of prior research and opinions on the matter of Japanese education.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Education all over the world has been analyzed, praised and criticized to no end. The education of Japan, especially, generates a great deal of attention, likely due to the fact that they at least attempted to import the American education system after World War II. At one point this attention came in the form of praise because of how miraculously the education opened a path from the utter defeat of war to the great prosperity of a booming 1970s and 1980s economy. And more recently, it receives more criticism for lacking creativity and placing large amounts of pressure on the students. Most everyone has an opinion on the matter, but focusing on the last decade or so, a few works in particular, précis the major issues well.

Much has been written about Japanese education and it is a rather controversial topic. As briefly mentioned above, there are so many things interrelated with education that there has been no shortage of angles from which to observe, recognize, applaud, or criticize Japanese education. These discussions and discourses have been taking place for decades, mostly in reference to events taking place after World War II. However, because the world has been changing so rapidly over the last decade or so, I am more concerned with how the modern day student perceives and is affected by education. Therefore, I will only be taking into account some analysis conducted roughly over the last ten years. Even within that time span there has been a quite a range of opinions on Japanese education and how it affects the students therein.

Japan: Encouraging Individualism, Maintaining Community Values, Ryo Watanabe

Watanabe begins by praising the Japanese education. "The Japanese education system has long been a source of pride for the country because of the high participation rate and the

nation-wide homogeneity of compulsory education. However, people's confidence in the education system is now showing signs of severe strain" (Watanabe 229). However, he quickly begins to count the ways in which the Japanese government could improve.

So many critics call to the Japanese government for educational reform, but few are as comprehensive as Watanabe in their demands. Here, he provides some example of where he thinks things need to change the most. First, he says, there is a need to reconfirm:

the basic purposes of education, [...]there is a need to respond appropriately to changes in the [...] advancement of globalization and the advent of a knowledge society, [...]there is a need to provide education that focuses on diversity and creativity rather than conformity and allows children to use their individuality and capability to the maximum, [...] there is a need for schools to be more accountable to parents and communities and for local boards of education to play a key role in education policy and administration" (Watanabe 237-238).

Watanabe captures the sentiments of most critics in calling for a complete overhaul of the Japanese system of education starting with redefining what education itself should mean to the state. He acknowledges the changes coming due to technology, and even calls out the common complaint about a lack of creativity. Lastly, he indirectly calls out the government. By asking that parents, communities and local boards stand up, he is indicating that the change won't happen from a top-down approach. He is saying that this change must occur from the core of the system. He may also be saying that the local boards are currently too complacent in taking whatever directives the MEXT hands them.

As far as developments, unlike most entirely negative detractors, Watanabe also goes against the grain by providing some examples of areas where things have progressed forward.

There have already been efforts to shorten the school week from six to five days a week, however some parents are worried the reduced class time will hinder students' chances of doing well on entrance exams. And there has been a movement to improve quality of teaching by reducing class sizes. "In general, these reforms have been favorably received. However they are still in the early stages and further improvements lie ahead" (Watanabe 241).

Watanabe also references the MEXT's national comprehensive assessment survey that involved 500,000 students at various ages that started in 2002. They plan to continue using this assessment to help provide insight into where efforts should be made to improve education. Though Watanabe does provide some good examples of progress, they are all still top-down strategies

Though it is similar to a survey, the parsing of student assessment based around factors that are attractive to the government is perhaps still not the ideal approach as the government is seemingly only concerned with what is economically or politically valuable and not what is most valuable educationally. The goal of the assessment is not necessarily taking into account the best interests of the students themselves. And although Watanabe demonstrates that he wants change to start from the bottom, he doesn't really provide any insight into the opinions of those who reside there. This is something I intend to do with my survey analysis.

Japanese Higher Education as Myth, Brian J. McVeigh

On the far critical end of the spectrum is Brian J. McVeigh. He has many publications describing his issues with Japanese higher education but one account in particular resembles the analysis I set out to accomplish. In *Japanese Education as Myth*, he analyzes many of the issues within Japanese education from his American perspective. Based on accounts from his experience teaching in Japan for several years and his interactions with his students and

colleagues at the time, he formed his opinions that Japanese schools are several flawed in a number of ways.

"What impressed me most about Japan's higher education is not that university operations did not just fail miserably: [...] While working in Japanese higher education I noticed countless examples of how this system pursued the converse of its proclaimed purpose" (McVeigh 10). McVeigh makes it quite clear on multiple occasions that he is only speaking to his own experience, and that while he does believe there is a similar, if not worse, situation to be found at most universities across Japan, that does not necessarily mean it is the case everywhere. Still however, he feels it is ubiquitous enough to express such strong opinions regarding the various faults in Japanese education.

He argues that the Japanese education is a profound failure in that it does not even come close to what it claims to do. He acknowledges the many complaints that Japanese citizen themselves have expressed through national surveys and news reports. He also briefly anecdotally mentions that elderly Japanese are similarly critical of the current post war system of education and that they feel prior to the war, they were challenged in things like critical thinking, one of the major categories where current Japanese education is commonly criticized.

Most notable perhaps, he cites the four-function approach of Kirsten Refsing to analyze schooling:

In (post) industrialized societies the learning-grading -labor process has become an indispensable part of maintaining and expanding politico-economic order and power.

Schooling has come to have four basic functions: (1) education: teaching, reading, writing, arithmetic, science, and other general skills; (2) socialization: training responsible citizens and members of society, who are well mannered, caring, and aware

of their society's central values, such as the work ethic and gender roles; (3) selection: channeling and distributing talent through the labor market using a series of examinations; and (4) depository; 'safekeeping' and holding ' the young until they are ready for the labour market, and especially until the labour market is ready for them (Refsing in McVeigh 12).

Function one is the purpose of learning basic skills. Function two is for learning how to be a contributing member of society and how to interact with others. Function three refers to the economic aspect as a form of appropriately filtering capable citizens through employment channels. And function four refers to higher education as a gestation period or sorts where young citizens are allowed to lay in wait they find employment or employment finds them. In previous sections, I echoed some of Refsing's functions of education in some of the ways it serve a society and McVeigh similarly agrees for the most part.

He finds that Japan succeeds superbly in parts two through four but has been far less effective with respect to number one; this is true, especially, of tertiary education. McVeigh also acknowledges the popular conundrum of how Japan managed to reach such economic success despite its system of education. In other words, how could Japan have such a stagnant education and yet achieve such economic prosperity.

McVeigh considers many of the flaws he has found in his experience regarding Japanese education in the context of a major problem they lead to. One of the major problems is where a plethora of simulations occur. These simulations or ritualistic facades are taking place in the classrooms with a lack of legitimate engagement and studying, in the media with recognition of problems but no demands for actions, and most of all in the government and their calls for 'reform.' Each of these rituals of fraudulence only serves to damage Japan in the long run.

The place where they are damaging Japan the most is in the 'innocent victims' that are the students. McVeigh makes his belief clear that he does not blame the students for the suffering they must endure as a result of the shortcomings of a stubborn government. "Rather it is the very structures and policies themselves (specifically the 'cookie cutter' model of education configured by the forces of state and capital) that make it very difficult for students to discover their own interests, strengths, and talents" (McVeigh 16). I strongly agree with McVeigh that the students are the most important part, and that they are suffering the most in what he sees as a mockery of an education.

In closing, McVeigh reviews the reform system in Japan, and attempts to explain why we have been hearing about reform for so long and yet so little has changed. He basically extends his simulation or ritual analogy to the entire reform system at large and says that the system of reform in Japan is another ritual that is not meant to actually change anything. In response, "what is needed is a 'reform of reform' and a serious rethinking of the very terms used in the discourse about reform" (McVeigh 255).

McVeigh passionately explains many of the dissatisfactions he has experienced through his time teaching in Japan. Many of his criticisms, while often valid, are originating from his identity as an American as well as his position as an instructor. Alternative to this, I wanted to take a more student-centric approach and compile their opinions directly as another student. If most students are not aware of what is going on beyond their control, then perhaps McVeigh's strategy is more effective than asking opinions of students who may be unawares. While this middle-down approach (instructor's perspective) to analyzing Japanese education is perhaps better than a top-down approach, my analysis specifically targets the perceptions of the students themselves.

Between Epistemology and Research Practices: Emerging Research Paradigms and the Tradition of Japanese Comparative Education, Shoko Yamada and Jing Liu

Shoko Yamada and Jing Liu contribute a chapter on how Japan perceives and manipulates comparative education. They examined articles referencing debates that have been taking place within the Japan Comparative Education Society (JCES) and their Journal called 'Comparative Education. Thereafter, they observe how the field overall in Japan has been changing and/or stagnating since the 1990s via these entries. They also take into account issues that focus on newer topics, at least for Japan, like globalization and gender. However, they conclude that nothing, not even these new topics have really tilted the scale at all.

Due to the integrated nature of the internet and modern economics, the field of comparative education continues to thrive. And having adopted nearly all of their policies from the United States of America after World War II, Japan, especially, has an education system rooted in comparative education. Though Japan had their own struggles as well as their own educational strategies for dealing with their problems, the ways in which they do so can hardly help but be compared to the likes of the US. Though one might assume that would lead to a more encompassing education strategy, Yamada and Liu point out that Japanese are not so concerned with that. "Traditional comparative educationists in Japan emphasize the importance of a fine description of the reality of the countries studied but are not necessarily interested in contributing to policy-making or reform of the education system" (Yamada and Liu 388).

According to Yamada and Liu, Japan acknowledges other countries in their curricula, but they not really interested in making systematic improvements based on those differences. They recognized that these criticisms are nothing new. They have been occurring for years on end and continue on in more recent studies. One might wonder why this is the case, to that question

Yamada and Liu say "the core issue surrounding the debate over the boundaries of comparative education is often a matter of power rather than academic authenticity" (Yamada and Liu, 389).

They don't quite make it clear to whom or to what they are referring when they say it's more a matter of power. Some candidates however, might include the Japanese government and/or the powers that be within the Japanese economy. Yamada and Liu are mostly focusing on the field of comparative education. While they do a great job of exposing the fact that even the Japanese comparative specialists are not concerned with integrating changes from other countries, they also contribute little to the perspective of the students.

The Changing Structure of Japanese Higher Education: Globalization, Mobility, and Massification, Reiko Yamada

Reiko Yamada discusses some of the larger scale changes that Japanese universities have been experiencing and how the Japanese Ministry of education, culture, sports, science and technology (MEXT) has responded. Specifically, she is concerned with how globalization and high enrollment have impacted the situation. Globalization through technology like the internet has enabled information as well as students to be highly mobile internationally and Yamada supports the notion that Japan is finally starting to recognize that.

She also attributes the high enrollment rates to a declining birth rate. She claims "with 49.9 percent of recent high school graduates enrolling in higher education in 2003, Japan entered the 'massification' phase. At present, this means that almost every student who wishes to attend university is given admission" (Yamada 83). Because there are so many more students, it can be more difficult to determine whether or not they are all prepared and capable. In turn, this causes Refsing's paradigm of university education as a sort of filter for jobs and financial and/or social

benefits to similarly break down. These things are finally serving to change the Japanese education from the inside out.

Regarding globalization and the internet, Yamada introduces the position of Japan's Central Council of Education (CCE). According to Yamada, in a CCE report on the future of Japanese higher education:

The council claims that the twenty-first century is the age of the knowledge-based society and that, as a result, in such a society higher education has become more important, not only for individuals (so-called personality Development), but also for the government (the National Strategy). Accordingly, the Japanese government has invested heavily in certain aspects of education, encouraging both research and educational programs that cultivate highly skilled students" (Yamada 85).

So it seems the Japanese government is finally responding to the many criticisms and the new information-age by investing in new educational strategies. Unfortunately, the situation still has not graduated beyond a government centered top-down approach and the changes are only taking place with respect to how these investments in education will benefit the government. Perhaps that caveat cannot ever be avoided. Furthermore, it remains to be seen what will come of these investments. This statement looks attractive on paper, but this would not be the first time rhetoric has been offered with no subsequent effective action.

Yamada also briefly describes in greater detail, one of these aforementioned programs. The directive of the 2009, Global 30 program, is to increase foreign student enrollment to both assist Japanese students through interaction with other students as well as to assist the foreign students themselves by affording them a study abroad experience, both of which contribute to making both groups of students more competitive internationally. " We can view the Global 30

program as a symbol of the desire among Japanese universities, by providing education to promising, qualified students from all around the world while generating opportunities for students to share and collaborate on research projects on a global scale" (Yamada 100).

Yamada also acknowledges that one way of quantifying the affects of these new found government level initiatives for education, on the students, is to assess learning outcomes. She disclaims that it can be very difficult to measure as there is no universal standard and the systems for doing so between Japan and the US are already very different. Basically, the US has many metrics for assessing learning outcomes, whereas Japan has undertaken very few. Nonetheless, "with the approval of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), [...] my research fellows and I developed in 2005 a Japanese version of the College Student Survey (JCSS); then in 2008, we developed the Japanese Freshman Survey (JFS)" (Yamada 91).

Both were based on previously designed, HERI surveys. Her research goals were to contrast student experience and self-evaluation between the US and Japan, find the effect environmental factors have on students, and then find the relationship between environmental factors and learning outcomes. She conducted the JCSS in 2005, 2007 and 2009 and the JFS took place in 2008 and 2009. "The surveys track learning behaviors, experience, values, motivation and student self-assessment" (Yamada 91).

Via her two surveys she found some interesting things. In her JCSS, she found that "Japanese students have fewer learning experiences than American counterparts [...], Further, continuous data shows that the learning experiences of Japanese students tend to improve over time" (Yamada 92). She also noted that Japanese students exhibit only modest learning outcomes, compared to Americans.

In her JFS, she found that because obedience and following guidance or external instruction is instrumental for success in Japanese high schools, Japanese students can be conditioned to be somewhat overly complacent. They carry this with them into college and it hinders their development in more demanding university settings. Her data shows that "unlike their American counterparts, Japanese students experience a far less rich educational experience - on top of which, many Japanese students expect to take remedial classes. Also, as noted earlier, Japanese students' self-evaluation of their learning outcomes were lower than American students'" (Yamada, 95). According to Yamada's results, it seems Japanese students, overall, not only expect less of themselves but moreover, still tend evaluate themselves lower, at least in comparison to American students.

Yamada clearly contextualizes some of the changes Japanese universities have been experiencing and provides a great example by briefly describing the Global 30 initiative. Particularly, she investigates deeper into Japanese self-assessment. Yamada comes the closest to obtaining the type of data I am interested in. She modifies an American self-assessment survey for Japanese students, administers it over the course of many years and compares the results. Though I was not afforded as much time, this is almost precisely the type of analysis I am conducting. While she did obtain excellent data, the questions were focused around self-assessment and performance. She is taking an even more microscopic approach than I am by observing one very specific aspect of student perception. I on the other hand, am interested in learning how students feel about their entire educational experiences overall.

METHODOLOGY:

The methodology that served as the basis for this research was a survey/questionnaire study. While studying at Waseda University in Tokyo, Japan during spring 2013 from March

through August, I obtained survey responses from Japanese, American and other foreign students, classmates, friends and random passersby. After returning to my home institution, The University of Arizona, I administered the same survey, in English, to students to obtain their opinions of an American University. In order to expose some strengths and weaknesses with either of the two systems, I set out to culturally compare and contrast the Japanese system with that of the American system from the perspectives of the students.

When it was clear to me that studying abroad in Japan was going to be a reality, I saw it as a rare opportunity to explore my major even further. I decided to combine the study abroad experience with my honors thesis and conduct a cultural comparison survey with some of the time I would soon be spending in Japan. Because my study abroad was going to be limited in time, I was still going to be studying abroad and adjusting to the myriad of new experiences that come along with that, and my Japanese language skills were still rather confined, I concluded that a less intrusive questionnaire/survey approach would be the ideal method for obtaining the opinions of students in a way that I could apply to both Japanese and American culture. Thus, I created a short five minute survey/questionnaire for Japanese University students (and later, American University students) to take so I could try and learn more about their opinions of the university experience.

Survey

The survey consisted of eleven short form questions, where respondents would make value judgments based on a five point scale, with 5-strongly agree to 1-strongly disagree. These were designed to obtain quick judgment data from respondents. I also added a short questionnaire section with five open ended questions designed to give students an opportunity to

express any deeper sentiments. *See appendix A for a sample Japanese survey. See appendix B for a sample English survey.*

Students were permitted to omit any information they preferred not to share and because many of them either did not complete the information section or left it completely blank I am limited in what representative demographics I can report. After seeing so many blanks, I became less concerned with how the responses were distributed among the various demographics, and instead I became more focused on what the specific responses were at large.

In total I obtained 129 responses from university students. 64 of these were from Japanese students, 40 from American students. I was also surprised to receive 25 responses from students originating from various other countries like Taiwan, China, South Korea, France, Hungary and Iran among others. Respondent's ages ranged from 18-30 with the majority between 20 and 23. Respondent genders were relatively evenly distributed with slightly more females reported than males. The majority of Japanese respondents were studying at Waseda University, and the majority of American respondents were studying at the University of Arizona. All respondents were studying at University at the time of administering the survey. Before writing up my results I hypothesized to myself that many students would actually have more problems than anything with their education. In many cases, the data proved me wrong, but in certain other areas the data revealed some surprises.

RESULTS/ANALYSIS:

Japanese Student Survey Results

Japanese people have somewhat of a reputation for submitting rather reserved survey responses compared to Americans, despite how they may or may not truly feel. While this is obviously not true of all Japanese people, the discrepancy was apparent when comparing the

average survey response data to the short answer questionnaire replies. For now, I will focus on the analysis of the 64 Japanese respondents in the table below:

Japanese Survey Results *because values are rounded up, all do not amount to 100%	5-Strongly Agree	4-Agree	3-No Preference	2-Disagree	1-Strongly Disagree
Your education is valuable to you	70.3%	28.1%	0.0%	1.6%	0.0%
You are satisfied with the state of your current University	23.4%	46.9%	14.1%	15.6%	0.0%
Discussion/activity based courses are more effective	21.9%	37.5%	28.1%	12.5%	0.0%
Lecture/memorization based courses are more effective	0.0%	18.8%	31.2%	35.9%	14.1%
There are many courses available in the style you prefer	21.9%	39.1%	21.9%	14.1%	3.1%
You have ideas that can make your University better	15.6%	26.6%	37.5%	14.1%	6.2%
Your grades accurately reflect your academic ability	7.8%	40.6%	26.6%	18.8%	4.7%
Other Countries have better learning environments	32.8%	43.8%	21.9%	1.6%	0.0%
You value your creativity in your courses	32.8%	35.9%	17.2%	10.9%	1.6%
Your professors value your creativity in your courses	7.8%	34.4%	31.3%	21.9%	3.1%
What you learn in class is necessary for success	23.4%	35.9%	26.6%	14.1%	1.6%

**table 1*

Overall, the survey responses in table 1 were rather tame. Most responses fell in the 4-agree category, with the second highest distribution falling into 3-No Preference. Aside from merely having no preference, I would suggest the high frequency of 3-No preference might indicate apprehension to express an opinion one way or another. Unfortunately, this part of the survey cannot analyze that.

The most outstanding numbers came in response to the value of education. 98.1% agreed that it was valuable to them. Beyond that, it appears most respondents agree (59.6%) that discussion based course are more effective and disagree (40%) that lecture based courses are

more effective. Despite the reputation Japanese courses have for lacking creativity, 61% still agreed that there were course available in the style they prefer. Another point contrary to popular perception is that 68.7% of respondents value their creativity in their courses. So the idea that Japanese students have no creativity appears not to be the case, as far as the students are concerned.

In sum, it appears that most Japanese respondents valuable their education and value their creativity. The majority of them also find discussion based courses effective, lecture based course ineffective, and they agree that the courses they prefer are available. It must be noted, that this survey does not attempt to analyze how respondents would qualify 'creativity.' Their concept of creativity may differ from what a typical American might expect. Still however, the students' responses are indicating that they seem rather satisfied on average.

American Student Survey Results

American Student Survey Results

American culture in general is characteristically known as being more expressive and liberal with their opinions. It is expected that compared to Japanese respondents, the American students will use less 3-No Preference, and more 5-Strongly Agree or 1-Strongly Disagree. The results for the 40 American respondents are in the table below:

American Survey Results	5-Strongly Agree	4-Agree	3-No Preference	2-Disagree	1-Strongly Disagree
Your education is valuable to you	70%	25.0%	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%
You are satisfied with the state of your current University	7.5%	65.0%	15.0%	5.0%	7.5%
Discussion/activity based courses are more effective	25.0%	45.0%	25.0%	5.0%	0.0%
Lecture/memorization based courses are more effective	2.5%	7.5%	55.0%	35.0%	0.0%
There are many courses available in the style you prefer	17.5%	27.5%	47.5%	5.0%	2.5%
You have ideas that can make your University better	15.0%	40.0%	35.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Your grades accurately reflect your academic ability	7.5.0%	50.0%	25.0%	12.5%	5.0%
Other Countries have better learning environments	22.5%	15.0%	45.0%	17.5%	0.0%
You value your creativity in your courses	37.5%	42.5%	15.0%	2.5%	0.0%
Your professors value your creativity in your courses	7.5%	40.0%	42.5%	7.5%	2.5%
What you learn in class is necessary for success	12.5%	47.5%	37.5%	2.5%	0.0%

*table 2

Contrary to my expectations, table 2 shows rather similar results to those of the Japanese students with a few exceptions. Most American University students agree (95%) that their education is valuable to them. A slightly higher 80% of American students value their creativity. A similar 70% agreed that discussion based courses are more effective. And a slightly lower 35% of American students think that lecture based courses are ineffective. Also, 47.5% of American students agree that their professors value their creativity while a close 42.2% of Japanese students feel similarly.

The only differences in the American results, compared to the Japanese results are evident only in having ideas for improving the University and whether or not other countries

have preferable learning environments. 55% of American students agreed that that have ideas that could improve things, while a still close 42.2% of Japanese felt similarly. A surprisingly high 37.5% of American students agree that other countries have better learning environments, while a much higher 76.6% of Japanese feel that other countries have better learning environments.

Overall the American results turned out to be quite similar to the Japanese results. With the only major exception coming in response to other countries having better learning environments, Americans are apparently, similarly satisfied with their education.

Foreign Student Survey Results

I was not planning on collection data from other foreign students at Waseda, but while asking I happened to come across 25 students studying abroad from other countries. Just for comparison I will compile that data in table 3 below:

Foreign Survey Results	5-Strongly Agree	4-Agree	3-No Preference	2-Disagree	1-Strongly Disagree
Your education is valuable to you	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
You are satisfied with the state of your current University	8.0%	44.0%	36.0%	8.0%	4.0%
Discussion/activity based courses are more effective	36.0%	28.0%	36.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lecture/memorization based courses are more effective	0.0%	0.0%	56.0%	36.0%	8.0%
There are many courses available in the style you prefer	8.0%	32.0%	20.0%	40.0%	0.0%
You have ideas that can make your University better	8.0%	60.0%	28.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Your grades accurately reflect your academic ability	16.0%	32.0%	24.0%	28.0%	0.0%
Other Countries have better learning environments	28.0%	32.0%	36.0%	4.0%	0.0%
You value your creativity in your courses	12.0%	56.0%	28.0%	4.0%	0.0%
Your professors value your creativity in your courses	8.0%	12.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%
What you learn in class is necessary for success	0.0%	36.0%	44.0%	16.0%	4.0%

*table 3

Though these respondents are not Japanese they were referring to the Japanese University, Waseda, in their answers. Overall, the distribution is similar to what was seen in both the American and Japanese results. 100% of respondents agree that education is valuable. And most foreign students agree (68%) that they value their creativity. The only significantly different figure among the foreign students is that a much higher 68% agree that they have ideas that can make University better. I was expecting this type of percentage for American students, but it even exceeds them. With this number in mind, the Japanese responses now appear somewhat peculiar.

To this question the highest distribution of 37.5% selected no Preference. Both groups are attending the same university so either the students are having dramatically different

experiences or perhaps there are cultural factors to take into account that are preventing the Japanese respondents from reaching a similar percentage.

Questionnaire

After the survey was the questionnaire. I included these short answer questions to provide another outlet for students to share their opinions. Though the survey allows for easier to parse statistical analysis, those responses are limited to the five point value judgment. The questionnaire on the other hand, revealed some interesting responses which at times even contradicted the results that came out of the survey. These results were harder to tally and draw statistics out of, so I will be describing the results verbally. *See the bottom of appendix A for the Japanese Questionnaire section. See the bottom of appendix B for the English Questionnaire section.*

Japanese Student Questionnaire Responses

What does education mean to you?

Most of these responses were similar. Generally, they fell into two categories. Most often, the responses echoed motivations of success or future goals. For many respondents education is somewhat of a means to an end; a way to become successful or a way to reach the goals they have set for themselves. One person wrote “Education is a necessary component in life. I think that without an education, the opportunities for an individual are certainly limited. For instance, a successful career; a fulfilled life.” On the other hand, a few people did not view education as a mere a tool, they instead saw it as the end itself. One person responded, education “is a way to enrich myself and how I perceive things.”

Why are you attending University?

The responses to this question yielded rather similar responses to the previous question. By far the most popular response to this question reflected the idea of attending university to one day get a job or to find a career. One person, quite plainly expressed that they are attending University “because I want to work in the future.” This might indicate that Japanese students do not truly care about learning and just want to get a “good job in the future.” However, another popular response indicated “to explore the areas of my interest that I couldn't step into in my wildest dreams during middle school/high school years.” Another popular response spoke a desire to gain knowledge. One person wrote in response, “to gain knowledge to train myself intellectually and develop as a person.”

What two things would you change to improve your University?

By far, the most popular response was a desire for higher quality of instruction. This ranged from “have the teachers be more interested in teaching!” and “improve the quality of professors” to wanting “more American university style teachers.” To make matters worse another common response was actually critical of other students. Many respondents also felt that the “student level of passion towards education is really low. So more motivation would be nice.” In sum, if students aren't interested in learning and professors aren't interested in teaching, that begs the question: why is either party participating in what we are calling “education?” Contrary to the survey results, it seems Japanese students do in fact some criticisms.

Ironically, another common response was actually the lack thereof. Quite a few respondents left this question blank but other changes called for things like lower tuition, smaller classes and more study abroad opportunities, which falls in line with the 76.6% agreeing that other countries have better learning environments. It seems many Japanese students are not satisfied with the education available to them. But the second most popular response overall was

actually introverted. Many respondents actually said things like "I need to read more books," "I should want to study more seriously," and "sociability." When I made this question I was not expecting respondents to look inward for an answer. It will be quite interesting to see the American perspective of this very question.

Would you like to study abroad? Why or why not?

Nearly all of the respondents said yes, they either want to or are already planning to study abroad. However, there were a range of reasons as to why they want to study abroad. For the most part, many want to experience/compare other cultures or improve their English. Echoing an earlier point from the previous question, one respondent even said "Yes, and I will because I've heard the quality is way better than Waseda University!" Interestingly, one respondent who is, in fact, Japanese, actually said "No, because I want to improve my Japanese more."

What occupation do you hope to obtain when you graduate and how is your University helping you get there?

The responses to this question as far as career choice were quite varied. But the meat of this question lies in how the University is helping the students reach their goals. Only two respondents gave any clear indication of how their University is helping them reach their goal. The first said "I want to be an International elementary school teacher...I'm taking teaching classes in the education department to obtain my Japanese teacher's license." And another respondent said that they "don't have a set vision but hopefully attending and graduating from Waseda University will open several doors for me," referencing the prestige attached to the name of Waseda. The other students who similarly cited Waseda's prestige alone as career assistance recognized the value of the Waseda name, yet made no mention of what Waseda is actually doing to help him or her.

American Student Questionnaire Responses

What does education mean to you?

Similarly to Japanese respondents most American students cited the future in some form. "It is important to me because it is my future." One of the more involved answers mentioned that "education has always meant passing tests and getting good grades. Actually learning or gaining experience in some academic form come from things beyond just education."

Why are you attending University?

Again, most American answers echoed Japanese answers in career goals. "To obtain a BA degree so I can get the career I want." This pattern of longer responses continues with "I am personally attending University first and foremost to receive a formal and universally recognized proof of the accumulation of my academic success (aka a degree). But I also entered university to meet other motivated and like-minded people my age and learn how to make lasting connection with them." None of the Japanese response came close to some of these longer American responses. Though, not evident in the survey, this data indicates that Americans are perhaps, more expressive.

What two things would you change to improve your University?

For American students, the most common response was in some way indicated a request to "lower tuition." After that most students wanted to improve some aspect of classes. "More classes of smaller number" and "classes and gen-ed. structure". Another common response was similar to "attempt to give more power to the student in terms of choosing professors. Since many professors who have tenure are unmotivated and not passionate about teaching, I'd like to give students more power in getting rid of such professors."

Would you like to study abroad? Why or why not?

Once again, almost all students said "yes, to experience another culture." Only a few said no, but all the reasons for no, had caveat that actually indicated that they wanted to go. "I want to go, but it's expensive" or "no, I want to go abroad, but I would prefer to work, not study."

What occupation do you hope to obtain when you graduate and how is your University helping you get there?

The occupation responses were also quite varied. Unfortunately, similar to the Japanese responses, very few students mentioned how their University was actually helping reach their career goals. "Something with international business. Actually, I don't know if it's doing much to help." Students who did feel university was helping, simply echoed question #2 by indicating how it would help with job opportunities. "Researcher, you need a PhD to be qualified."

Foreigner Student Questionnaire Responses

What does education mean to you?

Foreigners at Waseda surprisingly cited personal enrichment related responses most often. "Growing mentally mature, laying down foundations. I was surprised to see little mention of future or career goals unlike the Japanese and American respondents.

Why are you attending University?

Here, foreign students indicated some social pressures to attend. "My parents want me to and it is impossible to get a job in East Asia otherwise." But most of them expressed a split between personal interest and social obligation. "50 felt like an obligation, 50 to see what I want to do for my career."

What two things would you change to improve your University?

Foreigners displayed a wide range of responses here. There were no strong trends here, but a common reply indicated "evaluation of teachers."

Would you like to study abroad? Why or why not?

All of these students were already studying abroad in Japan, so there was no particular trend here. But some indicated they were doing "to learn one more language."

What occupation do you hope to obtain when you graduate and how is your University helping you get there?

The most common answer here was actually undecided, but most did not fault the university in any ways. "I still don't know and I haven't research a lot on the subject so I haven't asked my university about this yet."

CONCLUSIONS

Japan has the reputation of having a highly flawed system of education for good reason. Not only was their infrastructure completely uprooted after World War II, but they also were forced down a narrow path back to prominence with very little wiggle room. "From the 1950s to the early 1970s, Japan experienced a period of building capacity, without any major deviations from the one set up during the U.S. occupation in the post-World War II era" (Furuto 278). They took the manufacturing approach far. However, the strategy that brought them all the way to top two world economies is now betraying them.

Technology has brought about a new information age where access to information of nearly any type is immediately abundant. In this new environment, things change overnight, and people must be able and willing to rapidly change, adjust and adapt. These principals now also apply to education, and new types of learners, accustomed to the ways of the internet are eager for change. Blinded by their own vested interest in the economy, the government of Japan has continued to prove that it is not genuinely interested in change for the betterment of its students. Therefore, I wanted to investigate how things could possibly improve for students. Unlike the all

too common, top-down approach to discussing Japanese education, I created a short survey to directly obtain what students felt about their system of education.

I first established my plan in the context of some previous work. Watanabe describes minute ways in which the Japanese government has improved, but also provides a laundry list of things that need to be done for things to change for the better. McVeigh expresses for the Japanese education system the way it currently stands for failing to do what it claims, but does not fault the students in calling for a reform of reform in Japan. Yamada and Liu outline the ways Japan have not only ignored comparative education, but also have no interest in implementing lessons learned therein. And Yamada reveals some interesting trends by conducting surveys that gauge self assessment in Japanese and American students.

With this in mind, I returned to my original research question to learn what Japanese students think about education. Starting with the survey, the results were rather tame overall, but a large number of students value their education, prefer discussion based class and feel that the types of courses they prefer are available. This is unexpectedly similar to the American response, which were drawn for comparison. The major difference included attitudes towards foreign learning environments and most everything else was similar.

Moving on to the questionnaire portion, however, told a different story. Firstly, most students in all regions analyzed, view education as means for the future. A similar trend continued into question two with most students citing career and job aspirations as their motivation for attending university. Despite the lukewarm reaction in the survey, the questionnaire uncovered that most students have some clear criticisms and ideas they think would make their university better. Almost all students across the board, either wants to or already has study abroad to do things like experience new cultures and learn languages. And

lastly, most students expressed that their University is not doing the most to help them along their career path, but the students themselves often indicated that they could also be doing a little more.

The sample group of foreigners was rather small compared to the Japanese set, but I found those results quite interesting as well. Despite attending the same Japanese University, the results between foreigners and native Japanese diverged in quite few areas, like having ideas for improvement. This raises more interesting questions for further study regarding what factors may contribute to this divergence. Though I was not expecting to obtain or analyze this type of foreigner data, the underrepresentation of that sample group is one weakness of my study.

Regarding other weaknesses, I would have preferred to have had a more even representation of respondents among each group and more respondents overall. If I had more time, I would continue this study outside of the context of study abroad. Through study abroad I met many people to whom I could administer more surveys and gather more data but, my primary reason for being in Japan was not to gather data; I was there to study abroad. Thus, most of my time was spent in class, doing homework and participating in other study abroad related experiences.

Additionally, if I could repeat the survey portion, I might remove the 3-No Preference, as that truly diluted some of the responses that I was expecting more polarization out of. I also, might add the question of 'where?' to the study abroad question in the questionnaire portion in an attempt to discern which countries exactly students are most eager to visit. If I had even more time I would also add an interview portion. If the transition from survey to questionnaire in my short analysis is any indication, the transition from questionnaire to interview should reveal even deeper and more detailed opinions.

Some of my results may come as no surprise because they mirror many complaints that have been expressed in the past. Still, a glimpse of the future of education via students' desires becomes apparent. Based on my results, it seems that Japanese students, American students and foreigner students at Japanese university all have issues with their institutions. Therefore, it seems a hybrid of the two systems would be an attractive option moving forward.

Based on what students expressed in my data, this hybrid system would favor discussion based classes over lecture based classes. It would also emphasize creativity in students as well as in professors. Classes, schedules, meetings, and material should be as flexible as possible while still maintaining a core theme. Study abroad opportunities should be abundant, if not, mandatory with array of programs for various different fields of study. Tuition should be significantly reduced and Universities should be doing more to assist students and graduates with career searching. Students would also be empowered to express complaints or criticisms of incompetent professors and classmates alike, who hinder the learning experience.

This might come off as a naive wish list of unrealistic desires, but this is what students are saying is most important to them. So I think it is worth paying attention to. "It is important for educators, especially educational leaders, to form opinions of their visions of the ideal schools for the twenty-first century" (Gamage and Ueyama 78). As discussed, students being the chief components of education, are instrumental to healthy economies and are thus instrumental to governments. If the Japanese government or any other government wants to survive moving forward through this information age, they cannot continue putting their economic interests first. Otherwise, they will soon learn the hard way that the key to future rests not with them, but with the students.

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Appendix A

私の名前はハンナンソン、ダレルでニューヨークから来ました。現在、アリゾナ大学でアジア研究・日本を勉強しています。この調査・アンケートを行うことは私の卒業論文の一部です。この調査によって大学生の教育システムの意見を求めています。日本の大学生およびアメリカの大学生双方からデータを集める予定です。この調査は大学生の授業への関心についての調査です。あなたの個人情報はこの調査の目的以外では使用することはありません。この調査について結果を希望する場合は調査集計後メールで送られます。

情報

名前 _____ 生年月日 _____
 メール _____ 国籍 _____ # 兄弟 _____
 出身 _____ 大学 _____
 年生 _____ 専攻 _____
 サークル _____ アルバイト・仕事 _____

調査

(5)とても同意する (4)同意する (3)どちらでもない (2)同意しない (1)まったく同意しない

教育は大切だと思いますか	5	4	3	2	1
あなたは現在の大学に満足していますか	5	4	3	2	1
大学の授業はより活発に行われていますか	5	4	3	2	1
大学の講義は暗記中心の授業ですか	5	4	3	2	1
授業の選択では多くのコースの中から選べますか	5	4	3	2	1
あなたは大学を良くするために何か考えが持っていますか	5	4	3	2	1
あなたへの評価は正確にあなたの学力を反映していますか	5	4	3	2	1
他の国では、より良い学習環境をしていると思いますか	5	4	3	2	1
あなたは授業で創造性は大切だと思いますか	5	4	3	2	1
あなたの先生たちはあなたの創造性が求めていますか	5	4	3	2	1
授業情報が、成功のために必要である と思いますか	5	4	3	2	1

アンケート(裏に続く)

1. 教育の意味は何だと思いますか? _____]
2. 大学生になったのはなぜですか? _____]
3. あなたの大学での経験は何を改善するべきだと思いますか? _____]
4. 留学したいですか?それはなぜですか? _____]
5. 卒業をした後で何の仕事をしたいですか?あなたの大学の支援が必要だと思いますか? _____]

★質問に答えていただきありがとうございました。なお、調査結果を希望する場合は下記に丸をおつけください。
 調査結果を知らせて ① ほしい ② 知らない

Appendix B

My name is Darryl Hutchinson and I am from New York currently studying East Asian Studies - Japanese at the University of Arizona. Conducting this cross-cultural survey/questionnaire is a part of my senior thesis. My goal in administering this interview is to obtain the opinions of students' respective systems of education. I intend to gather data from Japanese University students as well as American University students. From this student perspective, I will compare the results to highlight any strengths or weaknesses in either system. Your name will not be shared or cited when aggregating the data into my final report and my results can be emailed to you, once complete, if requested. You may omit any personal information you would rather not share.

Information

Name _____ Gender _____ Age _____
 Email _____ Nationality _____ # of Siblings _____
 Hometown _____ Current University _____
 Year _____ Major/Minor _____
 Circles/Clubs _____ Job _____

Survey

	(5)Strongly Agree	(4)Agree	(3)No Preference	(2) Disagree	(1)Strongly Disagree
Your education is valuable to you	5	4	3	2	1
You are satisfied with the state of your current University	5	4	3	2	1
Discussion /activity based courses are more effective	5	4	3	2	1
Lecture / memorization based courses are more effective	5	4	3	2	1
There are many courses available in the style you prefer	5	4	3	2	1
You have ideas that can make your University better	5	4	3	2	1
Your grades accurately reflect your academic ability	5	4	3	2	1
Other countries have better learning environments	5	4	3	2	1
You value your creativity in your courses	5	4	3	2	1
Your professors value your creativity in your courses	5	4	3	2	1
What you learn in class is necessary for success	5	4	3	2	1

Questionnaire (you can answer on the back if you need more space)

1. What does education mean to you?
2. Why are you attending University?
3. What 2 things would you change to improve your University experience?
4. Would you like to study abroad? Why or why not?
5. What occupation do you hope to obtain when you graduate and how is your University helping you get there?

* Thank you for answering taking this survey. Please indicate below if you would like to receive the survey results by email. *

① Yes ② No