

**Taming Japan's Democracy:
The Making of Homogeneous Japanese Citizens
through Education**

by

Yoko Oka
BA, Willamette University, 1995

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

Although the significance of education is widely recognized, the content and regimentation of education is not often discussed in contemporary Japan. This thesis analyzed the Japanese education system from the Meiji Restoration to today, revealing how the Japanese education system has molded citizens in favor of state power. The persistent system, which has produced citizen conformity, eventually created mindless self-censored citizens. As a result, because of the repeated education dogma, Japanese youths are desperately trying to be ideal Japanese citizens. Nevertheless, the ramifications of the education system in Japanese society, have led to the *Hikikomori* (or hidden youths) and high suicide rates. The findings of this thesis are based on the education guidelines from the Japanese education ministry and from interviews with various Japanese people. The conclusion is that if the Japanese education system keeps ousting the freedoms of students, the system may once again have a devastating effect on democracy as was seen in Japan in the 1930s.

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Dedication

To Yoshito Kawauchi, MD, who convinced me that many more lives could be saved by politics than by medical doctors if politics was thoroughly scrutinised.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Is democracy ...that the people shall consent to what the government proposes to do, or that the government shall do what the people want? The two things are very different, and yet if all we want is to produce consent, it can be got in either way (Arblaster, 1987, p. 93).

Democracy originated in ancient Greek: *demokratia*, meaning *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule) (Held, 1987, p. 1-2). By its very nature and definition, controversies have arisen over the meaning of democracy. As complicated as it is; however, democracy has not been interpreted merely as the system or the institution of government. Rather, for some characteristics of democracy, include people's rights to be free from any suppression and opinions, should be taken into account. Therefore, in this thesis, I define democracy as a form of not only government, but also a society, which "must [have] a climate of freedom within which opinions about anything can be freely expressed and discussion conducted without fear or restraint" (Arblaster 1987, p. 93).

Because of the existence of various opinions among citizens, attainment of consent can be highly painstaking. There cannot be consent without exhaustive discussion. However, if people are reluctant to voice dissenting opinions, the outcome could be easily achievable. The outcome might appear to be consent. However, this is not consent that one of the cornerstones of democracy promises. In other words, discussion should not be discouraged to merely achieve consent even in a society where consent is highly valued. If a nation claims to be liberal democratic, which broadly guarantees people's political, moral, and economic liberty (Kellogg 1999, p.28), little self-censorship

should exist in expressing one's viewpoints to facilitate a conclusion about what people want. Various opinions are not only encouraged, but expected to be expressed to the powers that be. Liberal democracy is not tantamount to consent without debate or freely expressed opinions. However, the premise of liberal democratic political structure does not automatically lead people to discuss freely. In other words, systems within the liberal democratic political structure can be the menace of exercising liberal democracy. Therefore, examining the social structure within the legitimately recognized liberal democratic nation, as Japan, to see what makes citizens' reluctance to voice their opinions is the key component of this thesis.

Japan is considered a liberal democracy by its free, fair and competitive elections, constitutional guarantee of individual rights, and a state that operates on the basis of the rule of law. Japan has a Constitutional Monarchy that allows citizens to choose or dismiss their leaders by general elections. Moreover, according to Japan's constitution, "Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed" (Article 21, Chapter III)¹. However, even when observing the people of 'democratic' nations struggle with authorities, Japanese citizens seldom exercise their constitutionally guaranteed political rights against authorities. Further, the structure in Japan made it impossible for people to dissent or openly dissent against authorities. Education is the primary site in which consent is achieved. Many Western educators have been stunned by the extraordinary self-discipline exhibited by very young students in Japan (McVeigh, 2006). In the workforce, union activities are solely a matter of going through the motions (McVeigh 2006). It is difficult to distinguish class, sexual

¹ See Appendix A.

orientation, religion, or political preference among ordinary people (McVeigh 2002).

This begs the questions: Diverse opinions exist, yet, how is it possible that they are little expressed? Or as McVeigh claims, is this one of the outcomes of suppression of one's opinion and the discouragement of self-expression? Or do Japanese people feel obligation not to voice their opinions? Then, what made them so?

To have relatively quiet citizens, in a population of 127 million (Statistics Bureau 2011)² even in controversial policy-making, some might guess that the citizens have been trained to be not vocally subversive. Then, where is the training center for creating such citizens? Because the educational system is deeply-rooted in the citizens' lives with one of the highest advancement rate of 98% for high schools³, examining the Japanese education system would be worthwhile. Hence, this thesis asks a number of questions: has Japan's educational system been built with the aim to suppress its citizens' individual freedom even though one of the original aims of the government was to achieve a sustainable democracy in Japan, especially after World War II? How are the self-disciplined citizens cultivated through the content and function of education in Japan's nation-building process? How is the education system able to survive from the 19th century? Then, what might be the ramifications of the system?

By asking above questions, my hypothesis is as follows. The Japanese educational system, since the 19th century, has produced laws, regulations, guidelines and curricula to promote self-disciplined citizens who have learnt to suppress their opinions and not question the authorities. Moreover, the system has been sustained and vigorously

² <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/index.htm>

³ Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau. Analytical Research Planning Division 2008 (Japanese only).

encouraged by Japanese industry. As a result, Japanese people do not realize that the so-called innate obedient Japanese characteristic is the result of the education system which Japanese government has created and recreated. My research question is significant for the future of existence of democracy in Japan, since I contend that as long as Japan continues to discourage dissenting opinions it may, in the end, be self-defeating and lead to the country repeating its history of the 1930s.

I became interested in this topic when I began working for a Japanese enterprise in 1995, and this interest peaked after I became a manager there in 2000. As a university graduate from the US, I had not seen recruitment procedures such as those used by Japanese enterprise. When acting as an interviewer of new employees, I was taken aback by the responses of the candidates, who all gave the same answers, as if they had memorized the manuals (which, in fact, they had). When I observed the candidates, they all wore identical suits (resembling uniforms), and even the female candidates wore identical shoes and had the same hairstyles and accessories (as if they had all prepared themselves at the same place). How could this happen in a democratic nation where citizens, in theory, have freedom of expression?

Each year at the enterprise, I was required to recruit new university graduates and had the chance to talk with employees who were in charge of university human resource departments. Surprisingly, they admitted that they taught their students how to reply, what to wear, and the favored hairstyle for their job interviews. Most surprisingly, the students obeyed the directives, without any question.

During the course of the interviews, I realized that few significant changes had occurred in Japanese society since before World War II. At that time, people conformed

to a certain way of living, thinking, and behaving, due to the implementation of various laws and harsh penalties that restricted freedom of the press and political liberties (Marshall 1994). Although Japan now claims as a fully democratic state, which guarantees people's freedom of choice in their lives for example, most Japanese citizens continue to conform. I questioned why the vast majority of Japanese people continue to conform, in light of Japan's claim for its democracy. In searching for the reason, I looked at Japan's education system, as it is the institutional system where citizens spend most of their time before entering the workforce.

Although Japan took a path to Constitutional Monarchy in the 19th century, the idea of democracy was not scrutinized, even in the government. At the time, the main goal for Japan was to catch up with other developed Western nations. The elimination of a class system and the discarding of the feudal system were to train all Japanese citizens to be competitive with the citizens of Western nations, as a goal for 19th century Japan. The chance to scrutinize democracy came only after Japan's defeat at the end of World War II, when democracy was brought to Japan by the US. Nevertheless, little chance existed to analyse what democracy might do for the country in the first place. Moreover, while the notion of democracy was neither scrutinized nor debated among the citizens, Japanese people had no idea about the significance of democracy. At the same time, certain value systems were maintained through education and allowed to rigidly survive. Ironically, because of the quick ostensible adoption merely the form of democracy, without allowing citizens to examine it thoroughly through education, Japanese authorities have been able to discipline Japanese citizens as they wish. For example, the authorities do not need to be accountable, because Japanese people feel they are not

allowed to voice opinions of dissent. When the authorities can do whatever they deem necessary, without consent or even hearing the voice of the people, the foundation of democracy may easily disappear. This could be a great threat to the future existence of Japan, as was seen in the early-20th century, when the country marched into war and silenced the people's lamenting opinions.

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. This introductory chapter is followed by five core chapters. In the second chapter, I review the literature on democracy and the connections to education with some general interpretations of democracy. Then, I will describe the current controversy about democracy and education for achieving the nation's development by examining two main competing views on education, commonly known as utilitarian and transformative perspectives on education. By examining the goal of education, I will explore how people can be moulded into a pre-determined form through education. By reviewing the pertinent literature, I will examine the relationship of democracy with education in Japan.

In the third chapter, I examine Japanese education history, from the 19th century to the end of World War II. In Japan, the goal of education has been to conform citizens towards nationalism and economic success. Japan explicitly adopted a utilitarian approach to education in order to strengthen the country. Looking at Japan's education system before World War II, it is possible to see how Japan entered the war with few internal struggles, even though the country had been aiming to be a democratic nation in the 19th century.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the Japanese education history, post-World War II, to see how the Japanese government interpreted consent/ individuality/ democracy, along

with codes that were distributed by the government in a “guidance” series in schools. During that era, Japan explicitly claimed itself to be a fully democratic nation, with a transformative perspective on education. Nevertheless, an examination of the education system shows how few changes occurred in the system since the 19th century. Modern Japan experienced nation-building twice: once in the 19th century and then after World War II. By looking at these two periods, the changes and continuation of education policies will be illuminated.

Along with the codes, policies, and guidance, I look at the Japanese curriculum to understand how the system has been rigidly sustained through the examination system. In particular, I focus on the role of education in the labour market. The final goal of the education system is to secure employment for students by ensuring that they are the most presentable and favorable as potential employees (McVeigh 2002). To be a successful citizen in society, the allocation of talented citizens through the examination system can be maintained not only by the system, but by the citizens themselves. Because of the Japanese examination system, simply revising Japanese government codes, policies, and guidance for education will have little overall impact on the system. Citizens believe that aiming solely for perfection in their examinations is the means to an end for a successful life. The significance of the examination system reflects patterns of behavior that are seen in contemporary Japanese society. In addition, the rigorous examination system easily produces conforming students and employees for the society. As a result, authorities do not have to be accountable for what they do, since the students grow to become adults who only know how to pass the examination with minimal impetus to raise questions to authorities.

In the fifth chapter, I look at the problems that are facing Japan today, which are caused directly or indirectly by the education system, such as Japanese students who are socially withdrawn from society (called *Hikikomori*). I also consider whether or not Japan's high suicide rates may be the fault of the system. I include excerpts from ordinary individuals to investigate their conformist behavior and the dilemmas they may be facing in society. A total of 10 interviewees, ranging in age from 26 to 38 years (6 females and 4 males) were chosen from a large sized, traditional trading company which represents a typical Japanese company culture with the assumption that they represent mainstream Japanese. The interviews were conducted at a meeting room in a different company in the first week of August, 2010. The interviewees were appointed randomly by their senior managers, whom I had known previously. The interviews lasted 30 minutes to 2 hours, and I recorded some, but not all, as some interviewees did not feel comfortable about being recorded. I took notes for interviews of those who did not want to be recorded. I also interviewed an expert who was introduced by a member of Fukuoka City Gender Equal Committee, in August 22nd 2011, who works with those who have difficulties surviving in society. In addition, on the next day, I interviewed two other experts who are agents of the system: one is a university career advisor and the other is a mental health supervisor in a company. From the interviews, I examined how the meritocratic democratic system is being sustained by the government and by industry. I also show that Michael Foucault's view of self-discipline reinforces the status quo, which increases production and develops the economy, in turn, sustaining the system.

The sixth chapter concludes the thesis.

Chapter 2: Paradox in Democracy and Education

The global pervasiveness of democracy has been especially prominent since the end of World War II and even more so after the end of the cold war, giving the impression that democracy is the desired form of government. Even so, the meaning of democracy has not been agreed upon by all scholars. In fact, the characteristics of democracy have evolved since the Athenian era. The key concept of democracy simply is “any form of government in which the rules of society are decided by the people who will be bound by them” (Kellogg, 2001, p. 24). In an introductory political science textbook, Kellogg (2001) called the existence of many interpretations of democracy as the crisis of democratic theory. The understanding of democracy has evolved as social structures change overtime. The current theory does not always adequately explain democracy in a government setting, even when the government is considered to be democratic (Kellogg, 2001, p. 25). Although democratic theory is still on its way to having a concrete definition for all, ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ are the key characteristics of democracy, as well as ‘majority rule.’ I now introduce different understandings and critiques of democracy.

From general arguments on the meaning of democracy, I examine the kind of role that education plays for a nation’s development, and for sustaining democracy. Then, I show how education can be a key factor to destroy the cornerstone of democracy, with particular reference to Michelle Foucault’s book, *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault’s explanation of the state’s purpose and necessity for discipline is particularly pertinent to my research.

From introducing various references about democracy and education, the rest of this chapter will cover interpretations of education in relation to democracy in Japan.

The Struggle to Define Democracy

According to Jean Grugel, World War II and the end of the Cold War brought about a new global ideology of democracy, namely, liberal democracy (Grugel, 2002). Along with the ideology of democracy in the capitalist “free” world (p. 34), liberal democracy was presented “as the only version” of democracy (p. 17). One of the problems of liberal democracy; however, is the tension between individual and community rights (Grugel 2002, p. 13). In particular, “...the exploitation and alienation generated by capitalism prevented people from realizing their potential and society as a whole from living in harmony” (p. 16).

By understanding the difficulty in defining democracy and justifying liberal democracy in general, Grugel (2002) introduced the following definition of democracy as “...the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men [and women] who are to rule them” (p. 9). In addition, for liberal democracy, people have inalienable rights to make decisions for themselves and to be committed to the notion that all people are equal in some fundamental and essential way” (p. 12).

Although it might be impossible to agree on a precise definition and application of democracy, even in the ancient Athenian era (Arblaster 1987), people’s struggles to overcome feudalism and limit oppression by rulers enabled democracy to emerge. According to Anthony Arblaster, “...in history the struggle for democracy and the struggle for fundamental liberties have very often been one and the same” (p. 94). His

definition of democracy as “...government by the people or at least by the people’s elected representatives” has a persuasive tone in that democracy is the best possible solution if one has faith in people (p. 2).

Nevertheless, democracy can be more of a facade and less a manifestation of Grugel’s sense of democracy, in which faith in people function in tandem. For example, one of the problems of democracy is that if democracy means a government by the people or their accountable representatives (Arblaster, 1987, p. 2), it has to be premised on the assumption that “governmental power was the power in society that politics dominated over social and economic life and that no factional power or interest group could successfully resist the legitimate might of the popular will” (p. 63). Thus, theoretically, democracies are supposed to bring citizen’s preferences into policy, along with protecting their fundamental rights (Grugel, 2002, p. 36). If that is the case, the fact that Hitler was elected by the popular vote (Arblaster, 1987, p. 2) is an example of democracy at work, gone awry:

...it is clearly possible in principle for genuine popular consent and active support to be given to a dictatorship or to an authoritarian regime, or to specific measures intended to restrict or even destroy democracy. It is conceivable that the people can consent to the abolition of democracy. If consent is the essence of democracy, we would have to accept that that could be a democratic act (Arblaster, 1987, p. 90).

In his work, *Democracy*, Arblaster illustrates the difficulty of defining democracy, by showing the evolution of democracy from the Athenian era along with the problems

which are linked to democracy. Although he does not call it liberal democracy, he states that democracy may apply to a whole society, and not only to a form of government (Arblaster, 1987). In his book, Arblaster shows that various different definitions of democracy never deviates from the idea of popular power and that power rests with the people (Arblaster, 1987). One of the characteristics of democracy that he examines is majority rule. The difficulty of majority rule in democracy is that the minority will never be able to govern: “[the minority is] being governed by the majority” (Arblaster 1987, 69). Since the main definition of democracy is the idea of popular power, he suggests that the minorities are also the people whose interests and views should be taken into account in the process of “policy-making and decision-taking” (p. 73).

Another component of democracy is that of equality. Arblaster defines equality as the means of equal ability among minority groups to influence the outcome of policy-making:

Democracy does not imply a limitless diversity within society. It needs a foundation not only of shared values but also of shared experience, so that people identify with the political system to which they belong, and can trust its procedures and their outcomes (p. 78).

In his final chapter, Arblaster analyzes consent in democracy. He begins by introducing the hypothesis that if people consented to the abolition of democracy and, “if consent is the essence of democracy, we would have to accept that that could be a democratic act” (p. 90). Nevertheless, he argues that the alternative definition of democracy, such as popular power or popular will, cannot allow to call it a democratic

act because people cannot “vote away their own power and their own rights” (p. 91). For Arblaster, consent is essential if for no other reason than because:

...what genuine consent needs is that people should feel quite free to voice their doubts and opposition, if only to create a situation in which there is the possibility of overcoming such doubts and hostility (p. 95).

And yet, he claims that consent alone is not sufficient in democracy. He argues that it is possible that “people may feel free and independent even when they are actually being manipulated” (p. 95). Moreover, he warns that influences are not diverse and competitive, but “generally combine to push their thinking, their attitudes and feelings in a single direction” (p. 96). To avoid being easily manipulated by unscrupulous “opinion-makers” is to be “exposed to the variety of opinions that normally exist in relation to any major issue” (p. 96). In other words, because of the possibility of this inherent danger in democracy, Arblaster suggests that to implement “free debate, free choice and genuine consent,” a level of education is necessary, “...such that people are aware of themselves as the targets of persuasion and propaganda, and are thereby enabled to resist these pressures” (p. 96).

Whereas Arblaster talks about the danger of people being manipulated, Philip Green and Drucilla Cornell raise questions about the issue of representation. In their article, “Rethinking Democratic Theory: The American Case,” Green and Cornell point out that without significant funds, it is impossible to run for any election (p. 520). Concomitantly, without capital, ordinary individuals cannot even lobby to draft legislation or administrative regulations (Green & Cornell, 2005). Green and Cornell do

not claim that individuals should be represented more effectively. Rather, no one else should be represented either just simply because one has capital (p. 524). Because of the role of capital, they claim that the American political system is neither democratic nor elitists. Instead, the system is merely ruled by “the wealthy and the well-connected” group of people who are eager for power to legitimize their ends so that it should be called “representative oligarchy” (pp. 522, 526).

In addition, Green and Cornell point out how the essence of majority rule has been distorted in the United States. They claim that, theoretically, majority rule is merely workable, and do not mean “morally better” (p. 529). Nevertheless, the American version of majority rule is what they call “authoritarian populism,” and it results in disguised democracy. The logic of the American version of majority rule is that, under democracy, the people must be virtuous. Therefore, polity, which is decided by people’s majority is virtuous only when the enemies of virtue such as “Jews, Communists, liberal elites, trade union bosses, terrorists, homosexuals” are expelled. This is obviously anti-democratic (p. 529).

Along with their criticisms of American democracy, Green and Cornell (2005) suggest some ideas to fight for democracy. Despite admitting to the difficulty of reaching unanimous consensus to self-governance, they suggest that “as many as possible differing voices must be given the space for representation and self-expression” (p. 531). Furthermore, if people have the will to live in a representative democracy, reforms of the system should not be given up. Citizens need to have an understanding and appreciation of “human manifests and the institutions they create” to sustain democracy (p. 533).

Although democracy is hard to decisively define, the significance of democracy for individuals in society is well explicated by the above authors. As complicated as it is, democracy will be at risk unless free debate and self-expression among citizens is encouraged. For democracy to work, the level of education also comes into play. The idea that education is necessary to sustain and operate democracy is not new. I now turn to education theories and the kind of education necessary for democracy.

The Significance of Education

The significance of education is discussed as a policy priority when nations consider their development in the international arena. Still, the kind of education is always a subject for debate.

In the textbook, “Introduction to International Development,” competing education perspectives about the role of education are discussed. One is called the utilitarian perspective and the other is the transformative perspective. In the utilitarian perspective, education demands “the transmission of knowledge and skills deemed to be necessary in the world of work and for the broader purposes of economic growth and national unity” (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009, p. 367). On the other hand, according to the transformative perspective, education “should be a force for liberation, encouraging learners to regard the world critically and to acquire the skills and aptitudes necessary for generating fundamental social change” (p. 368).

Although both perspectives seem to coexist in education policy in many countries, the two viewpoints have significantly different consequence including for democracy. For the most part, the transformative perspective has become “subservient to the

utilitarian view of education” (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009, p. 369). The reason is because, especially for developing countries, authorities regard “national systems of education as indispensable for ensuring the achievement of social and economic development” (p. 369). The consequence of the utilitarian perspectives can be devastating for a nation’s development in the long-run because its citizens never be able to learn how to change a political system.

If a country’s educational policy is informed by the utilitarian perspective, the system is more likely to become a tool for the government’s political purpose. Thus, social changes become more difficult (Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009). The authors introduce a scenario for this consequence. Since most countries are well aware of the significance of education for their economic development and social stability. It practically enables many people to access public education no matter what economic stratum they might be from (p. 370). Since it is public; however, an economic downturn might easily reduce the expenditure on education by the authorities (p. 371). That could give the private sphere a chance to take over education. What happens, then, is that only economically advantaged people can access education. The public sphere will lose its significance in education, and as a result, the function of education merely becomes sustaining and legitimizing the positions for a socially and economically privileged group of people (p. 371). Thus, the economically and socially disadvantaged group of people would lose not only the access to education, but also any possibility of changing the system (Maclure, Sabbah, & Lavan, 2009).

For developing nations, approaching education from the utilitarian perspective might be seen as a strategy for education to help the country to achieve economic growth

(Maclure, Sabbah & Lavan, 2009, p. 380). In that sense, both perspectives are sharing one similar aim – the reduction of poverty. One is by an economic growth and the other is by transformation of social structure (p. 381). Both perspectives coexist in many countries (p. 382). Even so, the inclination toward the utilitarian perspective is considered to hinder political mobilization and social change in many countries.

By realizing the possible outcome of educational policy informed by a utilitarian perspective, education officials at the Jomtien Conference of 1990 concluded that the magnitude of the transformative perspective suggests that education should be designed “to reinvigorate the potential of education as an agent of radical social change” (Maclure, Sabbah, & Lavan, 2009, p. 378). What educators concluded is that enabling of people to change a system can only be acquired by transformative perspectives in education.

By defining education as a tool for people to maintain their democratic power, John Dewey, in his book, *Democracy and Education*, claims that a human (referred to as a living thing) is vulnerable to being easily crushed by superior forces. Therefore, a living thing has to put its energy into securing its own existence; otherwise, it will lose its identity as a living thing (Dewey 1916). In Dewey’s view, this “energy” is education. Dewey then delivers Plato’s definition of slave, “as one who accepts from another the purpose which controls his conduct” (p. 68). Thus, to be free, we need an education. The emancipation of life from external restrictions can only be achieved by education. Interestingly, Dewey clearly noticed a danger of a “superior force” in government. At the same time, Dewey warned of the danger of popular suffrage without education for those “who obey their governors” as well as those who are elected (Dewey, 1916):

Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education (p. 69).

Furthermore, Dewey believed in Plato's argument that education can train the masses to be "useful" for "social use" and that will make a stable, organized society (Dewey, 1916). From Dewey's point of view, the expression of "social use" is not from a government's perspective. Rather, it speaks to people's opinions hindered by barriers of "class, race, and national territory". Therefore, to achieve democracy, a society needs those individuals "who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own," which will be achieved only by education (p. 69). Because of Dewey's belief in the necessity of education in a society as a whole, it stands to reason that he believed in equal opportunity to education by members of society (Dewey 1916).

Dewey raised the question that if an education system is for the achievement of self-will, to help a functioning democracy, then, how can the education system, which is conducted by a national state be free from any restriction, constriction, or corruption (Dewey, 1916)? Dewey introduced the difficulty of the relationship between the aim of education and the role of state. For Dewey, an "ideal state" had to be in existence to administer effective education (p. 72). If education is a social process, then without a definition of the kind of society people want to build, no definite meaning of the role and content of education is possible (p. 77). Therefore, the social aim of education and the national aim of the state must be clearly identified (p. 77). This is an unsolved paradox,

built upon ambiguity. Dewey (1916) argued that to have a progressive society, citizens must be educated so that individuals can be agents of the society. Furthermore, Dewey was optimistic that a common interest could exist between the governed and the governors. Hence, authorities should appeal to their subjects to activate their rightful powers as citizens of a democracy (p. 67). As a result, since one of the intentions of education is to encourage social responsibility by citizens, it stands to reason that education should create a progressive society that would validate democracy (pp. 76-78). In sum, Dewey maintained that the progression of a nation is a reflection of the educational level of its people (p. 66).

Nevertheless, this view of the relationship between society and state cannot explain why some nations choose to be detached from democracy even though the citizens are educated enough to attain equal opportunity and fundamental freedom. To be free, we need education, and the emancipation of people from external restrictions can only be achieved by education. Again, examining the kind of education is essential if democracy is sustained only by education.

Education and Democracy: Twisted Aim

Although higher education may be one of the few institutions left that fosters “critical inquiry, public freedom, and common deliberation, simultaneously keeping alive the promise of a democratic ethos and politics” (Giroux 2009, p. 670), according to Henry A. Giroux, it is loosening its role by abandoning its responsibility as “a democratic public sphere as it aligns itself with corporate power and market values” (p. 670). Thus, it demonstrates the utilitarian perspectives. In Giroux’s article, *Democracy’s Nemesis*, he

shows how American higher education has become objects for corporations as mere “training center[s] for future business employees” and the place to produce “literate customers” (pp. 671-672). Destroying the educational sphere by corporate power may “prepare the ground for an authoritarian regime” (p. 690).

Because of the emergence of the global market economy, education has become shaped by capitalism and become vulnerable to sustaining educational aims. What is necessary in sustaining democracy are a people who have exercised “critical thinking, participated in spirited debate, exercised an engaged thoughtfulness, and learned the necessity of holding authority accountable” (Giroux, 2009, p. 669). Giroux insists on the complex relationship by extracting John Dewey and Hannah Arendt’s ideas that, if we give up the above ways of educating people, “politics loses its democratic character and human beings grow irresolute and irresponsible, failing to act as thoughtful agents and engaged citizens ‘in concert’” (Giroux, 2009, p. 669). Overall, Giroux’s argument suggests that the emergence of liberal democracy, which takes capitalism into account, threatens the sustaining of the aims of education.

The idea that education only aims at sustaining the economic prosperity will threaten the existing democracy is warned by various scholars in the contemporary world. Martha C. Nussbaum, for example, warned that the emancipate aims of education can be destroyed by the contemporary education system.

Nussbaum, a law professor at the University of Chicago, is concerned that contemporary education does not value arts and humanities as much as science and mathematics. Her idea is that both schools and parents generally think that the former subjects are useless for students to earn money in ones’ life (Nussbaum, 2010). If; however,

education excludes the humanities and arts, students cannot learn how to think critically, approach world problems, or imagine the predicaments of others (p. 7). These abilities, according to Nassbaum, are important requisites for a sustainable democracy. By aiming only at national economic development, the entire education system is geared to produce obedient workers (p. 21). Eventually, such an approach will lead to the loss of democracy, which has an indispensable need for “alert and active citizens” (p. 65).

Self-Disciplined Subjects and Government Steering/Guiding

To sustain individual freedom, a type of self-government is necessary (Simons & Masschelein, 2006). The object of government is for people to be “governing themselves in a specific way” (p. 419). By analyzing Michael Foucault’s *governmentality*, Simons and Masschelein claim that a school is one of the functions of disciplinarian power “to secure the existence of freedom” (p. 419). Thus, no need exists for “brute force” on people to be incorporated within the modern state (p. 419), and people are also to be governmentalized through self-government to maintain “freedom” (p. 419).

Foucault clearly states that, to govern a modern state, it has to take a form of “surveillance and control” to exercise its power “in the form of economy” (Foucault, 1978, p. 92). To achieve a state’s aim, which is to maintain and exercise its sovereignty over its people and economy, the obedience of people to the law is necessary (Foucault, 1978), not in the form of a threat, but through discipline.

In his work, *Discipline and Punish*, French scholar, Michael Foucault clearly describes how one’s conduct can be steered by the education system, and how people are unaware of its suppressive power by taking up the role of good ideal citizens. For

Foucault, education is an example of people being submerged into submission without being aware of the disciplinary process underway:

...[discipline is] different from slavery because they were not based on a relation of appropriation of bodies; indeed, the elegance of the discipline lay in the fact that it could dispense with this costly and violent relation by obtaining effects of utility at least as great (Foucault, 1975, p. 137).

Foucault proposed that the education system enable the creation of individuals who do not ask questions about what they should or should not do. Even their bodies react automatically. Foucault calls this “docile bodies” (Foucault, 1975, p. 138). To use individuals efficiently in a state, docile bodies are a prerequisite, since in forming any useful act for the authority, nothing should be useless:

In the correct use of the body, which makes possible a correct use of time, nothing must remain idle or useless: everything must be called upon to form the support of the act required (p. 152).

Foucault does not claim that education is systematized by states merely to make disciplined individuals. Rather, he claims that the system exists because states need to produce disciplined individuals.

According to Foucault, disciplined individuals are an asset because the authority does not have to deal with subversive elements in society. To make individuals disciplined subjects, discipline is necessary. Foucault maintains that “the disciplines function increasingly as techniques for making useful individuals” (Foucault, 1975, p. 211). Moreover, when an overthrow of authority is possible, discipline usually works to

prevent this kind of takeover (p. 219). Foucault gives an example of the disciplined soldier. Once soldiers become disciplined, they never question what they have to do next; “the disciplined soldier begins to obey whatever he is ordered to do; his obedience is prompt and blind; an appearance of indocility, the least delay would be a crime” (p. 166). In this way, discipline is very much the political anatomy of detail (Foucault, 1975).

Foucault defines discipline as a power and political anatomy of detail as well as a “set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application and targets” (Foucault, 1975, p. 215). Foucault contends that authority figures take advantage of the fact that discipline is not innate and therefore use the opportunity in people’s lives through education (p. 138). In an education system, by disciplining the people through education, education itself works as “a learning machine” under the name of supervision. Eventually, the system creates a hierarchy and rewards individuals without making individuals aware of being manoeuvred (pp. 146-147).

Foucault also established how citizens become self-disciplined through relationships, claiming that discipline is “an art of rank,” so that each individual can be located in a certain rank, but because it is not fixed, individuals can circulate in “a network of relation” (Foucault, 1975, p. 146). When each rank is determined by performance, behavior, and so on, and each individual is aware of the possibility of mobilization among the ranks, the “cells” which contain the ranks come under “the scrupulously classificatory eye of the master” (p. 147). Eventually, the disciplined individuals become conformed by this process (Foucault 1975).

Individuals are all subjected to “subordination, docility, attention in studies and exercises, and to the correct practice of duties and all the parts of discipline” because they

feel a constant pressure to conform to the same model, (Foucault, 1975, p. 182).

Foucault's understanding of the role of education, which is to create self-disciplined citizens and conform individuals to the ideal model, contradicts the original purpose of education, which is to emancipate individuals from any restrictions to be free. Thus, this paradox has enabled and justified authorities for centuries to cloud the importance of examining democracy through the education system.

The Meaning of Democracy in Japanese Education: Consensus and Equality

The main research question of this thesis is whether or not Japan exemplifies the paradox of democracy and education. The paradox I mean that democracy is only attained by education. However, education can be the menace of achieving democracy. Therefore, I begin by reviewing various scholars' interpretations on how democracy functions in Japan.

Hiromi Yamashita and Christopher Williams (Yamashita & Williams, 2002) claimed that Japan has its own way of implementing democracy in a society. They argued that Japan's democracy has been established, not according to the Western notion of democracy, which they refer to as a majority rule, but rather, by consensus among citizens (p. 278).

According to Yamashita and Williams (2002), democracy was deeply rooted in Japanese history, "but not in a form that is readily recognizable to Western observers" (p. 288). If one takes the notion of democracy in the Western sense as government by the people, implying the inclusion of its voting system (p. 278), then consensus, which Japan values most, has been more significant than voting (p. 288).

The authors outline how the mechanism of consensus in Japanese society works well by introducing classroom politics. While Japanese teachers may view democracy as an irrelevant external apparatus (Yamashita & Williams, 2002), democracy as consensus is inherent in their pedagogical approach and practice (p. 285). This phenomenon is not the suppression of the students from authorities (p. 287). Therefore, the authors claim that regardless of whether or not it is a democratic approach in Japanese education, evaluating the school system as a whole is not relevant for concluding that Japanese school is less democratic (p. 288).

In another analysis of Japanese education, Edward Beauchamp (1989) is more reassuring. Even though he acknowledges existing problems in the Japanese education system, Beauchamp found that Japanese education has more freedom, compared to the education in other nations (pp. 244-245). In his view, the access to education and standards of education quality of Japanese citizens are the outcome of democratic education (p. 234). In addition to access to high standards of education, Beauchamp indicated that teachers educate students about the ideas of democracy “in performing the function of political socialization” (p. 242). For example, education is comprised of:

direct teaching about democracy and politics (that is, the intentional inculcation of beliefs and values), the authority structure and students’ experience in the classroom (that is, providing models and training in democratic decision making and participation) (Beauchamp, 1989, p. 242).

For Beauchamp, Japanese education has successfully promoted democratic principles and strengthened democratic elements within the context of Japanese culture by emphasizing

“educational achievement and community norms” (Beauchamp, 1989, p. 249). For him, the most prominent outcome of democracy in Japan is the egalitarian access to basic education across all of Japan (p. 250). Hence, according to the above authors, democracy is at work in Japanese education because it has not only been taught in school, but students also inherently know how to come to a consensus without enforcing it. One might ask if this is the true case in Japan.

Japan’s Education System for “Pseudo-Democracy”

The expression “pseudo-democracy” was introduced by Peter J. Herzog (1993) in his work examining Japan’s democracy in the society as a whole. Herzog insisted that Japan’s democracy is not yet flourishing in contemporary Japan (p. 10). Although he claimed that it is mainly rooted in the attitudes of the politicians and bureaucrats, he concluded that the most important factor in preventing Japan’s progress in democracy is the lack of understanding and lack of practices of democracy (p. 10). In his work, he described many phenomena that are not considered to be democratic.

When looking at the Japanese constitution, Herzog (1993) claimed that, without a doubt, Japan is a fully democratic state:

...The preamble asserts that ‘sovereign power resides with the people’ and proclaims as a ‘universal principle of mankind’ that ‘government is a sacred trust of people, the authority for which is derived from the people, the powers of which are exercised by the representatives of the people, and the benefits of which are enjoyed by the people’ (p. 11).

When Herzog (1993) examined the Japanese government's control over textbooks; however, he exposes censorship in Japanese school textbooks (p. 200). According to Herzog, the Ministry of Education is imposing censorship, which suppresses everything "the ministry does not like, including anything unfavourable to Japan" (p. 197). For example, the textbooks for elementary schools, junior high schools, and high schools must be approved by the Ministry of Education (p. 199). In the textbooks, historical facts, such as atrocities committed by Japanese armies in the second world war are not included (p. 200), and Japan is presented as a victim, from the emphasis on the atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the battle of Okinawa (pp. 200-201).

Herzog (1993) also exposed the reaction of the Ministry to a social study's case. The Ministry ordered an expression to be deleted, which stated the need for improvement in working conditions in Japan. Instead of deleting the reference to the improvement in working conditions; however, the following sentence was inserted: "...if women are to continue to work on equal terms with men, women's self-awakening is required in such fields as work morale and ethics" (p. 203).

In another example, Herzog (1993) shows that the Ministry "instructed the publishers to tone down the people's opposition to the consumption tax and stress the positive features of the so-called tax reform" (p. 204). Prior to World War II, Japanese education was generally seen as a propaganda tool (Yamashita & Williams, 2002) and, according to Herzog (1993), contemporary Japanese education is still "right-wing propaganda" (p. 205). As a consequence, the Ministry of Education's censoring of

historical facts, emphasizing Japanese victimization, and delivery of one-sided information in textbooks, hinders the functioning of democracy in Japan (p. 196).

Education as a Means for Nationalism and Economic Success

Japanese scholars, Naoko Saito and Yasuo Imai (Saito & Imai, 2004), outline additional reasons to explain why Japanese education is impeding the establishment of democracy in Japan. In their article, *In Search of the Public and the Private: Philosophy of Education in Post-War Japan*, Saito and Imai define pre-war and post-war Japanese education philosophy to be the same, in the sense that education is a means for pursuing the national interest (p. 587).

Before World War II, the Japanese political system had been established “as the mechanism of modernization and discipline,” for the education system (Saito & Imai 2004, p. 584). After World War II, the aim of the American Occupation Force was to dismantle “the militaristic and authoritarian power structures of pre-war Japan” (p. 584). Similarly, “...the educational system came to be radically reorganized, based upon the principle of democracy, [and] decisively influenced by America” (p. 584). When the occupational period ended in 1952; however, the high economic growth policy brought radical changes to Japanese society (p. 587). In tandem with the criticism of conservatives towards Deweyan philosophers, the Japanese education system returned to a pre-war system, except that Japan was no longer an authoritarian regime:

In the pre-war Emperor system private interest had been mobilized for the national interest, and this secured the state’s monopolization of the public realm.

The post-war system, which was gradually modified in the process of social

reconstruction and by the ‘miracle’ of economic growth, produced a similar mode of control, but one that now lacked a visibly authoritarian power center. ‘Man power ‘or human capital, was reproduced through the school system, and it was instilled into everyone that they must accumulate educational capital as an investment for later life (Saito & Imai, 2004, p. 587-588).

In this way, Saito and Imai (2004) suggested that Japan must scrutinize the meaning of democracy to “release the freedom of its young people from the invisible hand of national and economic interest” (p. 592).

Bryan McVeigh analyzed Japanese education as ‘constructed’ to take a part in building Japanese nationalism: “National states routinely encourage stateness and nation-ness via organizing, systematizing, and monitoring schooling operations” (McVeigh, 2006, p. 128). McVeigh argued strongly that Japanese education problems are not pedagogical, but “political” (McVeigh, 2002, p. 9). The rigorous examination system, for example, is to distribute the talents of Japanese citizens in the labor market (McVeigh, 2002, p. 11). From an early age, students are immersed in preparing for examinations. By the time students enter university, they have had little “breathing space and time to be themselves” (p. 9). In this way, the Japanese education system has been successful in creating “diligent workers and well-behaved citizens” (p. 13). To make good citizens who are also good workers; “early education-socialization is the basis for instilling the attitudes and skills” for the nation (McVeigh, 2006, p. 131). Using Thomas Rohlen’s words, by producing well-disciplined individuals, “the nation benefits economically [and]

society is well run” (p. 134), and the examination system has been well utilized for this goal:

...test-taking is driven by the capitalist developmental state and legitimated by the values of a renovationist ‘Japaneseness’ (perseverance, endurance, and a demanding regime of ‘test preparation’) (McVeigh, 2006, p. 128).

Because of the pervasive examination system, which includes all students, conformity was easily established, since the success of individuals in the examinations is understood to be the result of individual effort, which would eventually lead to economic success in society (McVeigh, 2006, pp. 128-132).

By conforming citizens towards one final goal, entering secure employment after a successful examination (McVeigh, 2002, p. 100), the instilled values of harmony and cooperation have helped hide class divisions, even though the examination system is actually imposing students to realize social hierarchy (McVeigh, 2006, p. 134). Although Japanese people, from a young age, are well aware of the differences that exist among them, Japanese are trained to withhold their opinions; for example, “it [is] wise not to voice their opinions” (McVeigh, 2002, p. 100). McVeigh maintained that Japanese university students have “a vested interest in being obedient and uncritical” (p. 100). The author believed that the whole education system is aimed to form the ideal state with the promise of economic power (McVeigh, 2006, p. 145) in exchange for individuality and creativity (McVeigh, 2002, p. 9).

One of Japan’s education philosophers, Teruhisa Horio, also criticized the education examination system. The strong system subordinated “the exam preparation

industry, in which schools now function as the site of the struggle over social selection...” (Horio, 1988, p. 17). Both textbook screening and the examination system have made it possible to organize Japanese society so that students “never grow up to become the kind of citizens who will demand much of anything, least of all their political and intellectual rights” (p. 4). This type of system breaches not only the educational rights of the child, but also directs “the academic freedom of teachers and textbook authors” into conformity (p. 17).

Whenever Japan encountered economic or security dangers, an ideology of nationalism emerged to unify the country. When the economic downturn began in the 1990s, strong attempts were made by the conservatives to reform the education law, which places more value on patriotism (Okada, 2002). According to Akito Okada, the themes behind the education reform in Japan were to cultivate patriotism, respect for Japanese history, traditions, culture, and international coexistence (p. 426). One of the core recommendations by the government was “an increased emphasis on moral education” to strengthen “the sense of belonging to the nation-state” (p. 427). The following reasons are given for the Japanese government’s claim to reform its education system:

...the Fundamental Law of Education was: (1) not created by the autonomous will of the Japanese people but ‘imposed’ by American officials; (2) modeled on foreign thoughts based on a different historical and cultural tradition; (3) doing considerable damage to Japanese traditional values as a result of too much emphasis being placed on ‘individuality’ ...; (4) too liberal to suit the conservative image of what Japanese education should be; and (5) lacking in assertion of the

importance of Japanese ‘traditional’ morality and values such as pledging people’s loyalty to the State, filial piety, family obligation, etc. (Okada, 2002, pp. 429-430).

Okada argued that reforming the Fundamental Law of Education, which was supposed to create democratic citizens after World War II, in retrospect, will threaten the democratic ideal of the post-war Japanese schooling system (Okada, 2002).

The ideal of democracy preceded people’s yearning for freedom from authorities. As time passed, the idea of democracy evolved into the struggle for fundamental liberties and equalities. Despite the variety of definitions, democracy has always stood as a safe haven for individuals. To sustain democracy, education has been a life-line, but education has also been used as a tool for producing new constraints. By systemizing the education system, it threatens to mould citizens to never question the authorities. According to Japan’s own interpretation of liberal democracy, the government and industries use the education system to produce favorable citizens/workers under the name of equality. In the following chapter, to understand how the education system has evolved over time, I look at the Japanese government’s interpretations of democracy and education since the 19th century.

Chapter 3: Japanese Education Aims for Building a Nation: 1868-1952

Drastic social and political changes have occurred twice in Japan since the 19th century. First, in 1868, the last Edo Shogun returned political power to the emperor, feudal policies were abolished, and a new constitution (popularly called the Meiji Restoration) was established (Jansen, 2000, pp. 334-336). Second, in 1945, Japan unconditionally surrendered and had no choice but to accept American occupation, thus bringing an end to World War II (pp. 666-674).

When the Meiji Restoration was launched in 1868, Japan tried to adopt the Western political system as much as possible, since the government thought that it would be the quickest way to catch up with Western nations. To reform the whole Japanese system as quickly as possible, reformists began drawing a picture of the modern nation in 19th century Japan. By no means was it to reject the idea of democracy as a form of government. In fact, Japan adopted the election system immediately after the Meiji Restoration. Nevertheless, to adopt democracy by merely implementing elections without scrutinizing the system, Japanese people had no chance to learn what democracy could do for them. For example, even though the election of 1936 showed that the anti-war party was the favorite (Fraser, 2001, p. 148), their voices were silenced by the whole system, and Japanese people could not do anything. Eventually, the system allowed Japan to become a militaristic nation in the 1930s. Even though the nation had two opportunities to change its course from the authoritarian regime in 1868 and in 1945, the same system of education was in place throughout. The education system has been systemized for

Japan's development, and has been supported and protected by industry to achieve Japan's economic development, but the system has never sustained individual development. In the following sections, I describe and compare the education policies and ordinances, and education codes in Japan, from the 19th century to the contemporary period, to reveal their parallelism.

At the time of the Meiji Restoration, because of the lack of a platform for the new nation, the Japanese government assumed the role as the architect for an ideal society that would be strong in its military and economics. Japanese authorities believed that education was one of the most significant elements for developing civilians to be comparable to the West, and for building a politically strong nation. Japan's modern education system was launched soon after the Meiji Restoration. An education scholar, William K. Cummings, concluded that the aims of Japanese education in the Meiji government were to:

1. Realize the spiritual training of the people so that they would be loyal, hardworking subjects of the emperor and not find Western liberal and hedonistic ideas too attractive,
2. Promote national integration,
3. Develop a technically competent labor force that would build a strong economy and nation,
4. Select by meritocratic means the most intellectually able youth for positions of leadership in government and business (Cummings, 1982, p. 19).⁴

⁴ All are direct quotes from Cummings 1982, p. 19.

Using Foucault's perspective, I offer my interpretation of the above aims, and suggest the following to be more realistic:

1. Indoctrination of obedience and discipline,
2. Conformity,
3. Economy-centered policy,
4. Excessive examination system.

From the Meiji Restoration (1868) to Militarism: Japanese Notion of Freedom

Before examining democracy in Japan, I first introduce how Japanese leaders interpreted individual freedom in 19th century society. The prominent Japanese scholar, Yukichi Fukuzawa, considered the relationship between common people and the government as ruler and ruled.

For Fukuzawa, a founder of Keio University, Japanese civilization was different from the West in terms of the understanding of freedom. He stated that freedom could not exist unless somebody else's freedom was restricted. Thus, before discussing freedom, Japanese citizens should know who is the ruler and who is being ruled. The distinction had to be clear, especially since the distinction was an element of Japanese civilization. Japanese people should understand that private land and even the lives of people were private property of the government. Consequently, the power had always been one-sided, there was no need to consider an imbalance of power, and seeking individual freedom would be fruitless. Japanese civilization had always been comprised of two parts in society: the Imperial House, which is an absolute ruler, and the people (Diworth & Hurst,

1973, pp. 135-139).⁵ The clear distinction between the ruler and the ruled was fundamental to Japan, and ordinary citizens were in no position to even consider the idea of freedom. In fact, beginning in primary education, students were taught about the duties of citizenship, and to avoid any dissonance. Students were encouraged to always obey the orders of the authorities. According to Arinori Mori, the first Minister of Education:

...pupils should be taught to obey at once the orders of teachers and administrative staff, and the dignity of the teacher must be fully maintained (quoted in Hall, 1973, p. 436).

Obedience was not the only creed of Meiji education. Conformity, which was construed to mean harmony, was another virtue that Japanese citizens had to value. For Mori, it was unacceptable that one's conduct and thought did not match (Hall, 1973, p. 436). Instead, he believed that "if everyone were to work together in mutual support of one another; all would be peace and harmony" (quoted in Hall, 1973, p. 441). Like Mori, the reformers also believed that harmony would help to rapidly establish the modern nation. Therefore, harmony was used as a means for creating national unity (Mitchell, 1976, p. 19). If democracy could be described as sustaining the fundamental liberties, then, the concept of freedom had a different meaning in 19th century Japan. Freedom was not allowed unless the state allowed citizens to have it. Within the limited freedom, citizens were required to act in harmony, and harmony did not occur spontaneously, except through an established system that used education to exert pressure on the people as discussed below.

⁵ Yukichi Fukuzawa "An Outline of a Theory of Civilization" 1874, translated by Diworth and Hurst.

The Beginning of the Japanese Education System

As proof of the newly established government's priority on education, a Ministry of Education was created in 1871, four years after the new government was formed. The Ministry of Education adopted "an ambitious plan for a highly centralized and uniform school system" (Reischauer, 1977, p. 187). One of the goals of the reformers was to create a "rich country and a strong army" (Jansen, 2000, p. 377). The idea was that increasing Japan's national power in the world would inevitably involve increasing economic and military power (Hall, 1973, p. 71). To promulgate the national aim, ordinary Japanese citizens had to be trained to be ideal members of society so they could contribute to the nation's growth in wealth and military strength. Through education, Japanese citizens were taught that the strength of the nation must always come before individual aims. One of the school codes described how students should be trained in school:

...pupils must be trained to cultivate the spirit of Obedience, Sympathy and Dignity. They must be filled with the spirit of loyalty and patriotism and made to realize the grandeur and obligations of loyalty and filial piety, and to be inspired with sentiments proper to our nationality (Thomas, 1985, p. 20).⁶

In addition, the Extraordinary Commission on Education of Japan, which was an external organization of the Japanese Education Ministry, stated explicitly that university education should mould students to nurture their spirit of respect for the state (Marshall, 1994, p. 107). In 1918, the Ministry of Education put forward a Meiji school ordinance that stated:

⁶ School codes written by First Minister of Education, Arinori Mori, quoted in J.E. Thomas.

Learning is nothing but an interjection to stimulate the specific development of the country by bringing culture to all levels of the people, because learning has infinite influence in the thinking of the nation. Accordingly, we must expect the really appropriate universities in the Empire to be able to keep the beauty of the individual characteristics of our country and to stimulate the thought of the state (quoted in Marshall, 1994, p. 107).

From the beginning, the nation-building process in Japan did not allow its people to involve any scrutiny of the concept or practice of democracy. Basically, democracy was considered merely as a form of government. In light of emphasis on harmony, the leaders used education as a tool for moulding the citizens. Unlike the education system of Western nations, in Japan, it was established without any input from citizens, being driven by the authorities. In Japan, citizens did not have an opportunity to contribute to the kind of education they might prefer. This contributed in laying the groundwork for creating docile citizens. According to Dewey (1916), such citizens are like slaves (i.e., those who accept from another the purpose which controls one's conduct) (p. 68). Dewey's concern about the menace of democracy without education may have rightly predicted Japan's outcome in the early-20th century; democracy could not function without education (p. 69). Moreover, because of the explicit policy of taking the utilitarian perspective on education, citizens could not realize the necessity of social change at the risk of the militaristic regime in the 1930s.

Japanese political scientists, Takeshi Ishida and Ellis Krauss, describe how the mobilization of popular support through the ideologies of complete obedience, loyalty, and

sacrifice to the emperor were successfully propagated within the school system (Ishida & Krauss, 1989, pp. 6-7). Looking at Japan's history in the late-19th century, the aim of education was overtly stated and easily accepted by society, as Japanese citizens had been moulded to follow the rulers without question. In his book, "*An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*," political theorist Yukichi Fukuzawa wrote:

Power has always remained one-sided, and a great chasm divides the rulers and the ruled. Physical force, knowledge and virtue, learning, religion... all have belonged to the ruling class (Dilworth & Hurst, 1973, p. 143).

In short, when the educational system was developed, its main purpose was to indoctrinate Japanese citizens to be obedient, to prevent any subversion, but to develop their skills that might help Japan develop economically. Along with education, Japanese citizens were programmed to understand the clear distinction between the ruler and the ruled. These explicitly stated aims of education clearly fit with the utilitarian perspective of education. The Meiji government needed to train its citizens to contribute to Japan's economic and military development. Therefore, the Meiji government considered education as a tool to legitimize its strategy to mould citizens to be nationalistic and patriotic, to pursue the nation's strength among other nations.

With the view of education as a tool for legitimizing the government's strategy, in the following section, I describe how the Meiji government implemented the system during nation-building.

Philosophy and Methods of Education in 19th Century Japan

When the Meiji government initially created the education system, the first Minister of Education, Arinori Mori, could implement a policy easily since no system was in place beforehand. His main philosophy emphasized “collective virtues and loyalty to the state (as being mandatory) for schools to contribute directly to the goal of national independence” (Marshall, 1994, p. 57). In other words, “public schools serve, after all, the purpose of the state” (p. 57). This philosophy was inculcated to the administrators throughout Japan:

The administrators of our various schools, therefore, should at all times be mindful of the fact that the undertaking is on behalf of the state, not on behalf of the individual student (quoted in Marshall, 1994, p. 51).

Mori also submitted the following to teachers:

Reading, writing and arithmetic are not our major concern in the education and instruction of the young... Education is entirely a matter of bringing up men of character. And who are these men of character? – they are the good subjects required by our empire. And who are these good subjects? – they are those persons who live up fully to their responsibilities as Imperial subjects (quoted in Hall, 1973, p. 398).

In Mori’s mind, education should include all citizens, boys and girls, in the country’s plan to build a national school system (Marshall, 1994, p. 40). For Mori, the

reasons for inclusion of all citizens in the education system were clear. Mori explained that:

the purpose of primary education is to provide such training as will enable the young to understand their duties as Japanese subjects, to conduct themselves in an ethical fashion, and to secure their own individual well-being (Hall, 1973, p. 411).

One of the unique techniques for embedding these education dogmas into citizens was Mori's introduction of military drills in primary schools. Mori believed that introducing military drills in the schools would persevere the strength of the nation by training, forging, and disciplining character, spirit, and frame of mind (Hall, 1973, pp. 424-425). Although it is unknown if Mori had considered the possibility of world war, the insertion of military drills in the schools, along with the strong demand for students to acquire a state-centered mindset and unquestioning obedience, was very successful in conforming student behavior and a very militaristic way of thinking. Because conformity was paramount, students were also conditioned through mental and emotional punishment, when they failed to follow the rules. For example, Hall quoted from witnesses of the military drills:

A shoe unlaced, a button missing, a cap/askew, a bayonet unfixed, or a salute sleepily delivered could entail confinement to quarters, segregation at meals, last turn at the common bath, or even a humiliating trial before the entire student body (quoted in Hall, 1973, p. 430).⁷

⁷ On the testimony of late-Meiji eye-witnesses.

Mori made his point by explicitly explaining to students that conformity to school regulations was important because students were to “follow their teachers’ commands, since they were not yet sufficiently mature (at ages 17 to 20) to distinguish right from wrong by themselves” (quoted in Hall, 1973, pp. 427-428). By bringing military drills into the schools, students were being domesticated to obey the rules. When students did not want to obey the authority, humiliation was used to quiet them. Students were easily indoctrinated to understand that subversive action was unacceptable in Japanese society. As Hall illustrated, Mori’s policies were successful in forging and disciplining the spirit and frame of mind of the subjects (p. 425). The Japanese education system was thus constructed at its base, to produce disciplined and obedient citizens. The introduction of military drills in schools is also perfectly matched with Foucault’s theory of producing self-disciplined subjects. Japanese citizens were to be self-disciplined, and never questioning the authorities (i.e., have “docile bodies”) to achieve the state’s goal of avoiding any subversion.

Another system that was instituted by Mori to achieve Japanese nation-building was the centralization of school textbooks and administrative interventionism by the Education Ministry (Hall, 1973, p. 448). In 1887, the Textbook Authorization Ordinance required publishers “who wished to sell textbooks to schools to have them scrutinized by a committee selected by the Education Ministry” (Marshall, 1994, p. 82). No rebuttal was expressed to the central control of textbooks, since Mori was confident that school directors, who were thoroughly respected by the prefectural governor, would make no mistakes (Hall, 1973, p. 428). For Mori, the authorities always made the correct decisions, and consequently, all education policy and decisions about curriculum and textbooks

became the function of the central government. Education was “no longer to be left to local communities” (Marshall, 1994, p. 33).

Japanese Educational Aim for Economic Development with Creation of Social Hierarchy

Along with the emphasis on obedience and conformity for national integration, Japan’s economic development in the 19th century was another priority. Consistent with the country’s goal, the emphasis was to become modernized industrially, but not politically (Thomas, 1985, p. 22).

According to Hall, Mori believed that by steering citizens away from politics, and encouraging them to enter careers, ultimately, they would be more useful for the “industrial and commercial development of the nation” (Hall, 1973, p. 457):

...the purpose of education was to promote the welfare, in particular the economic welfare, of the individual; the state would of course benefit from all this too, but in the final analysis the strength and independence of the nation would have to rest on strong and independent citizens... (pp. 3, 32).⁸

Mori’s theory was to reform education for Japan’s economic and national development:

Anyone who is the least bit Japanese must try to advance Japan from the third rank, where she now stands, to the second; and when she achieves the second rank,

⁸ Quote from The Dajokan Decree, Quoted in Hall. *Dajokan* can be translated as *The State Department of Japan* in the Meiji government (my translation).

then to the first; and finally to the foremost position in the entire world (quoted in Hall, 1973, p. 399).

To achieve economic development, the Japanese authorities found merits in recruiting the elites as well as the laborers. For example, the policies of the Ministry of Education showed that the structure of schooling should be matched to the occupational pyramid (Marshall, 1994, pp. 63-64). To entice the elites, males who would “wield the power of future Japan” were needed to occupy a few controlling seats at the universities (p. 64). As a result, the competition among students was fierce:

It was as if the teachers were bringing their students to a horse race or cockfight. It seemed that the teachers devoted all their energies to choosing and training good horses and cocks, while they didn't care for the rest of the animals, whether they died or not (quoted in Marshall, 1994, p. 43).

For the rest of the students who were not selected from the elites, they were to work as manual laborers in following such policy as: “a rich country and strong army.” Because of the priority to pursue this policy, the urban factory workers were to be recruited from the villages (Jansen, 2000). The workers were forced to labor under hard conditions, under the slogan that they were developing the nation. Because of the national indoctrination of conformity, and despite the harsh working conditions, most accepted the status quo without complaint (p. 557). Just as the government expected, despite the “Spartan conditions,” the workers were less able to organize any protest (p. 557). The youths were taught to be obedient to build a rich nation, and most of them were disorganized and unable to lodge a large-scale protest. In general, the national goal of attaining economic

development was to be achieved by the hard work of laborers. To discipline the laborers, a rigid social hierarchy was created and young people were indoctrinated with obedience to the authorities through education. The system worked perfectly from the late-19th century to the early-20th century.

Democracy and Education: Exclusive Equality among Citizens

In regards to democracy as a government by the people, Japan quickly adopted the representative system soon after the restoration. In 1881, just 12 years after the promulgation of a new constitution, Japan formed a national assembly (Pyle, 1969, p. 144).⁹ Nevertheless, this was not proof of the Meiji leaders' total acceptance of democracy as an ideal government, allowing for free discussion among citizens. On the contrary, Meiji educator, Yukichi Fukuzawa, said that "in a democratic government there is the danger that the views of the people can put the government in a difficult position" (Dilworth & Hurst, 1973, p. 43). Because of the increasing demands for democracy by the intellectuals, the leaders accepted the representative government to cast away any internal obstacles in their mission to build a modern nation (Pyle, 1969, p. 144). The leaders knew that representative government, with limited suffrage, would not compromise their ideology of unifying the Japanese people (pp. 145-146). Moreover, the acceptance of popular government avoided possible turmoil, while attracting some attention from Western nations (p. 144). As a result of not scrutinizing the characteristics of democracy, Japan had no opportunity to evaluate the potential benefits of democracy, or the possible problems that might occur if democracy was abandoned. Eventually, the idea of the popular government became more

⁹ Franchises were only geared to males who owned property (Jansen, 2000, p. 415), and expanded to all males over 25 years of age in 1920, and to universal suffrage in 1947 (Ishida & Krauss, 1989, pp. 7-9).

nationalistic, rather than democratic (Ishida & Krauss, 1989, p. 6). Government authorities in Japan thought that merely implementing an election among limited citizens could be an advertising pillar that could be used to tame the citizens and lure Westerners.

By the time the first national assembly was convened in 1890, Westerners were astounded to see that most Japanese were getting an education “comparable to that received by Europeans” (Pyle, 1969, p. 147). Equal opportunity for education was established in Japan at an early stage, but at the same time, most Japanese were becoming embedded in the rigid centralized education system. Because of the success in bringing almost all Japanese into the system, modern Japan’s education system functioned remarkably well to build economically and militarily strong nation until the end of World War II. The notion of education for all Japanese citizens was broadly agreed upon by the Meiji leaders (Marshall, 1994). Still, since education was not to encourage the citizens’ individual independence, but was to produce ideal Japanese citizens for the state, equal opportunity for education was used by the government to suggest that Japan’s democracy was in good shape.

In 19th century Japan, the government authorities did not intend to adopt Western ideas of liberal democracy, since they believed that liberal democracy which guarantees the idea of individual freedom was not well suited to the Japanese environment (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994). Although the idea of liberal democracy was not welcomed by the leaders, the education system was used as evidence of the country acquiring democracy. If, for example, one of the premises of liberal democracy was a

guarantee for people to have equal education opportunities, the Dajokan Decree¹⁰ could be read as a supportive document. It exhorted the following:

...we look forward confidently to a time when there shall be no village with an untutored household, no household with an untutored member. Parents and guardians should take this purpose to heart, cultivation a spirit of tender care for their children, and sending them without fail to school (quoted in Hall, 1973, p. 332).

Interestingly, Foucault clearly stated that the egalitarian principle is supported by discipline whose mechanisms are non-egalitarian. In other words, the discipline for all constitutes liberty (Foucault, 1975, p. 222). As an example to support Foucault's argument, I introduce Educational Minister Mori statement of 1873 to show how women's liberation was guaranteed by disciplining them according to egalitarian conduct:

If mothers have not studied in their younger years... they often drown their children in love without understanding the means for employing their loving power in rearing their offspring. Women, therefore, should first receive a broad general education, expand their intellectual horizons and learn how to use their wealth of love (quoted in Marshall, 1994, p. 44).

In addition, Japanese educator and leader of the Meiji government, Masanao Nakamura, reiterated:

¹⁰ Dajokan can be translated as the Department of State in the Meiji government.

...we must invariably have fine mothers if we want effectively to advance the people to the area of enlightenment and to alter their customs and conditions for the good... To develop fine mothers, there is nothing better to educate the daughters (Marshall, 1994, p. 45).

According to the idea of liberal democracy, the guarantee of equal rights is an essential concept. Since the Japanese government knew the concept, systemized equal educational opportunities for all Japanese citizens would be welcomed by the people and by the outside. Nevertheless, the government encouraged students to be moulded as Japanese citizens in a gendered way, and not by teaching them what they could learn. The government knew that in order to maintain the rigid educational system, women would have to be incorporated within the system. Therefore, education for women was not based on liberal democracy, but was a means for the system to attain national unity without subversive citizens. As a result, Japan successfully disciplined women to be good wives and wise mothers, under the name of an egalitarian attitude, by illustrating women's ideal way of life. This illustrates, as Foucault said, that egalitarianism and liberty were different stems.

Because of the strong aspirations and concrete plans of the government for education, including its vision of the ideal nation, equal rights for education were established. Ironically, the equal rights for education were for all citizens, regardless of gender, or social or economic class. This egalitarian access to basic education supported Beauchamp's claim that Japanese democracy was at work. Looking just at equal access to education, Japan appeared to be embracing democracy; however, the egalitarian

appearance obscured the fact that the education system was aimed at moulding citizens in a specific way. Furthermore, the idea of equal access to education did not emerge from the notion of democracy, which allows individual freedom, but from the needs of the state.

The Inexorable Track Towards War

The newly established education system taught citizens discipline and suppressed their individual freedoms. Nevertheless, the system of education may not have been the only cause for the obstacles in instigating democracy in Japan during the 1930s. The pervasive conformity among citizens, through military drills and a systemized self-censorship of free expression, also gave rise to the unquestioning support of citizens for militarism.

From the beginning of the Meiji Restoration, the Meiji government formulated its policies for promoting national integration and manipulating the people's thoughts (Mitchell, 1976). Although the Meiji Constitution encouraged public discussion freely, the government passed ordinances to censor the press and control literature (p. 22). The ordinances were also observed in other areas. For example, when the Japanese government needed to have strict control over political ideas to promote harmony and unity (p. 148), the Education Ministry created a special organization in 1934 called the Thought Bureau to justify the manipulation of student ideas (p. 149). One of the pamphlets published by the Thought Bureau glorified brotherhood and cooperation, stating that it "was necessary to unify national thought. Individualism and freedom of thought should be permitted, but anti-state thought had to be punished" (p. 149). The contradiction within the same sentence was present in statements used by the Japanese government. Under the veil of

blandishments of democracy, which allowed all Japanese people to have equal access to education, conformity was also being instilled without exception. Similarly, free expression of thoughts was permitted but thoughts against the state were not.

Education officials also created the National Spirit and Culture Research Institute for teachers to review the impact of foreign ideas on the nation and to make “the development of a distinct pattern of national unity around the emperor” (Mitchell 1976, p. 20). Predictably, the government’s attempt to control the ideas of citizens was mostly accepted by the ordinary Japanese. The citizens (the ruled) would be unwise to resent the ruler. Ordinary Japanese people learned to express themselves to serve the collective opinion (pp. 20-21), especially those of the ruler. Japanese citizens had been well educated to conform to wishes of the authorities.

Even though the general election of 1936 indicated that the majority of voters were against the war and the winning party had the slogan: “Against Fascism” (Fraser, 2001, p. 147), the path to military fascism began just six days after the election. Interestingly, an attempted coup d’état, that was begun by young soldiers who were against the election outcome, failed. Moreover, anti-fascism and anti-capitalism were the main political campaigns for the political parties at that time. The popular will never supported the military regime at this point.¹¹ Despite various interpretations that have tried to explain Japan’s becoming a military regime, an incident in northern China – the Marco Polo Bridge

¹¹ See *Democracy in Pre-War Japan* by Junji Banno Translated by Andrew Fraser 2001, Chapter 5 for details. “Party revival and the advance of social democracy (1936-1937)”.

Incident¹², which occurred on July 7 1937, giving the authorities a good reason to call for national unity among the Japanese people.

After the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which led to the second China-Japan war, the government escalated its control over education. At the time, Japan's democracy was crashing, and immediately after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the government began promoting "spiritual mobilization" (Mitchell, 1976, p. 162). The campaign was aimed at getting mass support for the war. Since the government needed to promote the movement throughout the people, the authorities went so far as to enshrine it into law. The government ordered municipal officials to create town and village associations. When a group was too large to be permeated with the pro-war sentiment, the group was divided into smaller groups, called *tonarigumi*, neighbourhood associations that consisted of 10 to 20 families (p. 162). The system of neighbourhood associations was sufficient to unite the people under the nationalistic and imperialistic dogma. Foucault (1975) argued that individuals tended to feel a constant pressure to conform to the same model. Japan used the same pattern in school systems, and the strong peer pressure thrust people into more and more conformity.

Besides peer pressure, the authorities also used foreign powers as a threat to Japanese citizens. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault used the plague as an example of how surveillance was justified by the authorities (Foucault, 1975, pp. 195-197). People obeyed because they were threatened with the consequences of the plague. The threat of the plague was justified in Japan under the name of war. Japan used the threat further by

¹² When Japanese troops attempted to enter the city of Wanping, China to search for missing soldiers, the Chinese garrison barred their entrance so that Japanese bombarded the city. (Tong, T.K. 1987, p. 20).

saying if Japan did not enter war, Japan might still be colonized by another nation. In addition to the threat, town meetings were also used by the authorities to threaten citizens for having dissenting opinions, and as a kind of surveillance, and to silence Japanese citizens.

As a result, the systemized education, where the people were under a cloud of threats, allowed the government to train Japanese people to become harmonious, and the people complied. Eventually, not only the schools, but the small communities also became indoctrinated to believe in specific values. The government deprived the people of their free thinking, which successfully led towards a national unity among ordinary Japanese citizens without the need to use a terrifying whip.

In the following years, until the end of World War II, the country's complete unity for the war was illustrated, even though it might have been unwanted by most Japanese citizens. In any case, the Japanese education system, until the early-20th century, had functioned as planned in generating conforming citizens. The unified nation served the government in implementing its authoritarian ideology through democratic coercion.

'Democratize' Japanese Education System: 1945-1952

After World War II, Japan had another chance to re-build itself. Because of its defeat in the war, Japan was under the rule of the Supreme Command Allied Powers (SCAP) (Marshall, 1994, p. 143). The main aim of the SCAP was the democratization of Japan (Beauchamp, 1989, p. 225). The SCAP sent an American Education Mission to Japan to liberate Japanese citizens from the "militarism, nationalism and the emperor system" (Saito & Imai, 2004, p. 587). Since the SCAP was mainly in the hands of the

Truman administration in Washington, the US under General Douglas MacArthur was the main investigator and reformer of post-war Japan (Marshall, 1994, p. 143). According to the investigation, the Office of Strategic Services described existing Japanese education as follows:

...the attitude that education should be for the purpose of the State rather than for the liberation of the individual has permeated the entire system. Elementary school instruction has been dedicated to the development of unquestioning loyalty. The Department of Education's exclusive copyright over textbooks, held since 1903, has made it possible to intensify this process of indoctrination (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 5).¹³

In addition, William Seabald, who served as an adviser to General MacArthur during the American occupation, reported that:

[Prewar Japanese education] had been used by the country's leaders as part of a policy of developing an obedient and subservient population. School has been transformed, primarily into agencies of indoctrination in militarism and ultra nationalism (quoted in Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 5).

Most American observers agreed that the Japanese education system since 1868 had been "consciously used by Japan's political leaders as an instrument to advance the ends of the state" (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 6), and the main mission of the SCAP was total reform of Japan's education system "along the lines of an American model"

¹³ Direct quote from Beauchamp and Vardaman.

(p. 7).¹⁴ Ironically, even though totally opposite instructions were given by the SCAP, such as elimination of nationalism, militarism and humanization of its emperor, the Japanese people's tendency to obey and accept instructions from above enabled the SCAP to quickly and easily implement education reforms (p. 7). When looking at the laws that were passed during the SCAP's review of education in post-war Japan, the complete change in direction from the previous era is obvious. Since the SCAP concluded that the militaristic and nationalistic concepts in education facilitated Japan to be a militaristic state, a democratic policy with less emphasis on nationalism was highlighted in the education policy. Nevertheless, the emphasis was short-lived.

In sum, the making of conformed citizens through education led to an unquestioning acceptance of nationalistic imperialism during the 1930s in Japan. In the same way, though the authorities have been careful to avoid using words such as nationalism and imperialism, the emphasis on moral education and harmony (conformity) was highly valued since the end of the SCAP era. For example, textbook censorship in the school system, economic-driven policies, and the excessive examination system still exists in contemporary Japan. In other words, the utilitarian perspective was explicitly used before World War II, but not explicitly supported in contemporary Japan. In the following chapter, I describe how the transformative perspective in education has never been valued in contemporary Japan.

To show the parallelism with pre-war education policy, I will look at the contemporary Japanese education system, with its education codes, policies, and curriculum. In addition, I will describe how Japan maintained its rigid ideal policies for

¹⁴ See Appendix B: The Fundamental Law on Education 1947 Version.

education, despite its painful memories, in considering the possible future consequences for Japan.

Chapter 4: Japanese Education Aims after World War II

When Japan regained its sovereignty from the SCAP in 1952, a new return to action in the policy on education was issued by the Japanese authorities. Again, it was implemented easily. The Ministry of Education denounced the insufficiencies of the Fundamental Law of Education (promulgated in 1947), which was enacted by American authorities, in favor of a more universally valid pre-war Imperial Rescript on Education (Saito & Imai, 2004, p. 586). Once again, the freedom in Japanese progressive schools came under national control (p. 585).

Japan established its own education system after the SCAP left Japan. As before, the Japanese government proudly announced that the government had institutionalized its school system to meet the official standard under the policy of reducing the “inequalities in educational expenditures per student” (Cumming, 1982, pp. 21-22). Although the Japanese authorities had once agreed to eliminate nationalism and militarism after the war, the government felt that the SCAP’s reforms had gone “too far” and that they had destroyed “Japanese values and traditions” (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 10). As a result, the Japanese authorities eliminated a number of “American-initiated” reforms, which had less emphasis on national unity, and changed them to fit the more traditional Japanese models (p. 11).

To see how Japan’s education system became institutionalized again, even after the pre-war system had been destroyed, I will begin by describing the Fundamental Law on Education. Then, I will compare the SCAP’s law to the laws that were revised and

added in 2006 by the Japanese government, to reveal their similarity to the prewar education system.

Comparing the Fundamental Law on Education (Excerpt)¹⁵

In 2006, the Fundamental Law on Education was revised. Many law-makers insisted on revising the law because it had been implemented by the American forces. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether or not it was the real reason, since the law had been in place for almost six decades. Some observers suggested that it may have been motivated by conservative ideology.¹⁶ In any case, the 2006 version, created by the Japanese government, reflected how they envisioned the law to be more suitable for Japanese society¹⁷.

The Aims of Education, Article 2

The 1947 version emphasized a respect for academic freedom, as we shall see, the 2006 version added a respect for Japan's traditions and culture, and to love the country and region as well as academic freedom. To state the respect for Japan in law made the version resemble the situation in 19th century Japan. Respecting traditions and culture would discourage students from defying the traditions, which would be the result if citizens were independent thinkers. According to Nassbaum (2010), the thinkers are those who can challenge the authorities (p. 48).

¹⁵ Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology- Japan. <http://www.mext.go.jp/> (Some content is available in English).

¹⁶ See Asahi Newspaper "My Education Reform" (Watahino kyouiku saisei) by Takashi Tachibana, November 7, 2006. (Japanese only).

¹⁷ See Appendix B for comparison

Added Articles 8, 10, 13

The Japanese government's involvement was indicated for education in private schools, and by parents and the community. It would internalize the authorities' aim to produce a specific kind of student for the communities as a whole. By affecting the private schools, the authorities would have a pervasive influence across all of Japan.

Control over Education, Revised Article 10

The 1947 version clearly stated that education must be properly demonstrated, and that all Japanese citizens must be directly responsible for education. Nevertheless, the 2006 version added the requirement for collaboration between the national and local governments in education. In other words, the authorities' encouragement was legitimized to downplay independence in education.

Significance of Systematic Implementation of Measures, Added Article 17

This Article reads that the government is the body that prepares the plan for the basic principles of education, and if necessary, the government must report to the Japanese legislature; schools have no right to change any plans.

By examining the revised Fundamental Law on Education, the government is clearly taking the overall lead in education. Since the government formulates the education plan, and the principles and measures, teachers and students are allowed little academic freedom. Although the post-war education system and revised new, Fundamental Law of Education seemed to be less authoritative than the pre-war system, I will now illustrate how systemic factors helped the system to gradually control education and thus weaken democracy.

Indoctrination of Obedience and Discipline

In 1970, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) singled out Japan, acknowledging that no other country has supported primary and secondary education with as much investment as Japan's (Beauchamp & Vardaman 1994). Many observers extol that the Japanese education system has offered equal opportunities to all citizens, with outcomes that are highly admired around the world (Cummings, 1982; Reischauer, 1977). Nevertheless, some argue that the egalitarian attitude has concealed the fact that widespread conformity in students is attained without exception. Most Japanese have been embedded with the same values, by the education system that is strictly controlled by the Ministry of Education. Without any freedom for schools to implement their own pedagogical styles, and with the government's restrictions, the schools have the identical pedagogical framework. The result is a specific moulding of all students in Japan.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the pedagogical approach, called *shushin*, used during the pre-war era, was abolished by the SCAP, and replaced by the *dotoku* approach, which focused on moral education (Beauchamp & Vardaman 1994). The *dotoku* approach has been modified many times since World War II, but the main premise remains the same: it teaches the image of an ideal Japanese citizen. Although the complete textbook of *dotoku* cannot be included here, some of the lists and timelines are of interest for understanding what is supposed to constitute the ideal Japanese citizen.

1. The Ideal Japanese as an Individual (1966 textbook version):

- To be Free
- To Develop Individuality

- To Respect Oneself
- To Be Strong-Minded
- To Be Reverent

2. The Ideal Japanese as a Family Man:

- The Home as a Place of Love
- The Home as a Place of Rest
- The Home as a Place of Education

3. The Ideal Japanese as a Member of Society:

- Respect for Work
- Contribute to the Social Welfare [of the country]
- Creativity
- Respect the Social Norm

The fourth list, *The Ideal Japanese as a Citizen*, is relevant to illustrate the similarities with the pre-war era and *shushin* education.

4. The Ideal Japanese as a Citizen

- Proper Patriotism

Thus, through the state, we find the way to enjoy our happiness and contribute to human happiness throughout the world. To love our nation, thus, correctly means to try to enhance the value of it. The man who is indifferent to his own nation is the enemy to his country.

- Respect for Symbols

We have loved and respected the Emperor. This was not separated from loving Japan and respecting its mission. “The Emperor is the symbol of Japan and the unity of the people. This position is based on the will of the people wherein lies the sovereignty.” Thus, loving and respecting the Emperor is synonymous with loving and respecting the Empire.

- Development of Japanese Character

The nations that have contributed most to the world have all had distinct characteristics. During and after the Meiji period, the unique characteristics of the leaders and people made the modernization of Japan possible. We can be distinctively Japanese today, while looking back upon our history and traditions.

Along with the Ministry’s desire to create ideal Japanese, the course on Moral Education has been compulsory in elementary and junior high schools in Japan. I now present some guidelines that teachers must follow exactly when teaching a Moral Education class. I choose guidelines for being an ideal Japanese citizen.

1969

- X. Try to understand the significance and aims of the groups to which you belong and try to enrich community life.
- XI. Try to understand the spirit of law and the meaning of order, so that you can learn to discipline yourself.

- XII. Love your country as a Japanese and try to aim to be a man who can contribute to the welfare of his fellow men, as well as to contribute to the development of our country (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994).

1983

2. To observe good manners, and to live in an orderly manner.
3. To keep oneself neat and tidy, and to make good use of goods and money.
24. To take care of public property, and to protect public morality with a full awareness of being a member of society.
27. To love the nation with pride as a Japanese, and to contribute to the development of the nation (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994).

2008¹⁸

- 4-2 Enhance one's sense of public morality and social solidarity to accomplish a more improved society.
- 4-8 Love your local land and respect the ancestors and elders who devoted to the society to improve one's local land.
- 4-9 Love the nation as a conscious Japanese to contribute to the development of the nation, and devote oneself to inheriting excellent tradition and creating a new culture.

In addition to the above moral education principles, in 1997, the Ministry of Education insisted that the program be called "Education of the Heart". The program, according to the Japanese educationists, Naoko Saito and Yasuo Imai, is to reinforce a rigorous discipline in children. The guidebook for "Education of Heart" has been distributed to teachers, students, and parents (Sato & Imai, 2004). Clearly, by distributing the same guidelines to all schools and families with children, without exception, the

¹⁸ Guidelines for Junior High school Moral Education. Ministry of Education. July, 2008. My translation.

identical message can be spread across Japan. In other words, while not explicitly stated, the instilling of unquestioning nationalism in Japanese children is a primary objective. Therefore, moral education has always been at the core of the teaching guidelines and the content has been unwavering since the Meiji era.

Along with the rigid moral education, the Japanese education system has used effective tools to enforce the obedience of citizens. Each school has its own rules, which strictly regulate the appearances and lifestyles of students (Tamura, 2007). Most Japanese youths are required to wear school uniforms and follow rigid dress codes (p. 463). Although the need to wear uniforms is debatable, sociologist Yuichi Tamura concludes that the phenomenon is an education strategy to promote collective identity and solidarity among students (p. 463). The rules for uniforms go beyond clothing, and cover hairstyles, socks, shoes, belts, ribbons, and other accessories (p. 463). By structuring “socially acceptable patterns of students,” it becomes easier for teachers to maintain order in school settings (pp. 463-465).

One might incorrectly assume that many youths are outraged by the strict dress code, and want to rebel against it. What then, compels students to comply? The report cards, called *naishinsho*, are submitted to high schools along with the results of a student’s entrance examinations. The *naishinsho* is strictly confidential, and used for an evaluation by the upper secondary schools. The report cards have the signature of the school principal and are based on information provided by the classroom teachers. Not only does the *naishinsho* include the student’s grades, but it includes reports about the student’s character and behavior (Platzer, 1988). Although some students may want to challenge the dress codes, they usually accept the system. Students are well aware of the

fact that a poor report on a *naishinsho* could destroy their future careers. The *naishinsho* is a powerful tool for students to get into the right high schools, and it became an “invisible whip” to keep Japanese students in line (p. 280).

Due to the *naishinsho*'s strict confidentiality, no-one knows how important it might be for a student's entrance to high school. Neither students nor parents are officially informed about the contents of the *naishinsho*, but students usually have underlying fears about it. This sort of mechanism used for discipline is a technology of power, as described by Foucault. Japanese students are by no means obedient by nature, but their obedience is derived from the use of simple instruments, which, according to Foucault, use hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and examination (Foucault, 1975). By the efficient use of the instruments, Japanese students turn out to be disciplined individuals or, in other words, Japanese disciplined individuals are made from “formless clay” by the system.

From an early age, student appearance and behavior is regulated by the dress codes and the *naishinsho*, which establishes the conformity and obedience of all students. Thus, students learn to defer to authority, and are tamed by the tools used to promote a collective harmony (Tamura, 2007). To further contribute to the students' conforming, the unavoidable entrance examinations produce a powerful effect.

The Function of the Examination System

During the SCAP era, American authorities believed that the prewar system of education, which emphasized rote memory work to pass the examinations, caused citizens to become “indoctrinated followers rather than thinking citizens” (Reischauer,

1977, p. 194). The rigid examination system; however, based on rote memory work, has continued to survive in contemporary Japan.

In the Meiji era, the examination system was used for filling the few seats available among the elites. At the time, the examination system was used for choosing elites who would be bureaucrats, business managers, or scholars (Marshall, 1994). In contemporary Japan; however, the examination system encourages all students to conform, under the name of egalitarianism. Japanese education is compulsory until grade nine, though the rate of advancement in the high schools was 92% in 1975.¹⁹ This figure does not include students who attended evening high schools, or other special schools (deaf, blind, and disabled).²⁰ In 1980, the rate of advancement was 95%,²¹ and since 2004, the advancement rate for high school was 98%.²² Even though high school is not compulsory, 98% of all students go through the examination system (regardless of whether or not the high school is prestigious), and 98% of all junior high school students go through the “intense, difficult, and often lonely experience of preparing for those examinations” (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 20).

Similarly, the advancement rate for universities was more than 38% in 1975, and reached 45% in 1995.²³ The latest figures show that 55% of Japanese go on to post-secondary education.²⁴ Moreover, 98% of Japanese youths who want to enter high

¹⁹ Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2008 Figures. <http://www.stat.go.jp/data/nihon/22.htm> (Japanese only).

²⁰ Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau. Analytical Research Planning Division 2008 (Japanese only).

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

school have gone through the examination system with the added anxiety from being stigmatized in the *naishinsho*. As a result, the system continues to produce obedient and self-disciplined citizens. Ultimately, the education system may be able to sustain itself indefinitely because students never learn the possibility of social change. The system reflects the national need to create “a literate mass of soldiers, workers, housewives, with ample middle-level technical skills” (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, pp. 4-5). Ironically, the schools have become the “exam preparation industry,” and according to educator, Teruhisa Horio, the examination system is interpreted by some teachers not as an education, but merely as the preparation for the exams (Platzer, 2002). As students take the system seriously, the system has more power over students. Thus, as Foucault suggests, the system became a new political anatomy, which increases the students’ abilities, but decreases their potential power by turning education into a “relation of strict subjection” (Foucault, 1975, p. 138).

Still, some also applaud the examination system. For example, Reischauer indicates that the examination system can be perfectly described as egalitarianism:

In the process, many class divisions were swept away by the implementation of a uniform nationwide educational system, which has made Japan one of the most thoroughly egalitarian societies in the world (Reischauer, 1977, p. 186).

Reischauer’s observation was clearly supported by the advancement rates in Japan. Almost all students in Japan, whether poor or rich, can get high school education. Ironically however, because of the “uniform nationwide educational system,” the government has successfully produced obedient citizens without exception. Moreover,

the government is not sweeping away the class system because the system is merely becoming an evaluation procedure to see whether or not students are sufficiently obedient. It cannot be considered as the consequence of equality. Rather, the examination system has become a valuable tool for the government to produce ideal Japanese citizens, without needing to use constraints or tactics of intimidation, as was the case in the 1930s.

Textbook Censorship

Along with the course curricula, textbooks are also determined by the Ministry. Although the government denies having control over education, de-facto textbook censorship continues in contemporary Japan. Academic freedom is being violated by the Ministry of Education, as shown by the textbook censorship.

Although the government never admits to censoring textbooks, the method of textbook selection is in a screening process, where the government decides what students will be exposed to in their textbooks. For example, official guidelines are in place for the examination of textbooks (Bukh, 2007, p. 689). Although the guidelines are not law, and could not be called censorship, and every prefecture is supposed to have the right to select its own textbooks, all published textbooks have to be approved by the Ministry of Education before they can be used in schools (Reiscauer, 1977, p. 194). In actuality, authors have to conform their approaches to a similar framework to gain approval by publishers, and eventually, by the Ministry (Horio, 2002, p. 17).

One of the biggest international debates has been over a textbook that describes Japan's invasion of Korea and China. History textbooks approved by the Ministry merely show a chronological sequence of political events (Bukh, 2007). The tone of the narration

about the war always describes the Japanese as victims (p. 697), rather than as perpetrators. Generally, the interpretation of past events from only one perspective tends to be disingenuous. Learning about various interpretations, before coming to a conclusion, is supposed to be part and parcel of education. The textbooks that have only one interpretation of history are a form of “improper control” of education, which is banned by the Fundamental Law of Education. Therefore, despite its non-law enforcement, the way of selecting textbooks is undeniably led by the government.

Education for the Economy

The postwar American reforms of Japan’s education system, which tended to emphasize the transformative perspective, were not welcomed by the business community or by the government. In the 1950s, Nikkeiren, a federation of some of Japan’s largest industrial firms stated that the education policy was too democratically-oriented, and called for an education system that more “closely reflected the needs of industry” (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 12). In 1953, a law was passed for the promotion of science education:

Article 1. Objective: In view of the fact that science education is most important as the basis for establishing a cultural state, this law, in conformity with the spirit of the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law, has as its objective the promotion of science education, assisting the citizens to acquire scientific knowledge, skills and attitudes and to cultivate their ingenuity and creativity with a view to enable them to carry on their everyday life in a more

rational manner and to contribute to the progress of our nation (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 136).

By allying itself with the business community, the government's aim for economic development was fostered by its control over education. The following is an excerpt from the White Paper of 1962 by the Ministry of Education:

...in the industrially developed countries, such human factors as scientific creativeness, technological talents, laborers' skill and the abilities to use completely all available resources have been recognized as affecting economic development, physical capital, and the labor force. The development of these factors, which might be identified as 'human resources,' will depend largely on the quantitative and qualitative development of education... Under these circumstances, education should be looked upon not as a mere item of consumption but as an investment in economic growth. Education is an indispensable factor in the full utilization of the fruits of this period of rapid acceleration of technological innovation. In this context, regarding education as an investment should be emphasized (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994, p. 156).

With the alliance between the government and the business community, the Ministry of Education could easily implement policies without opposition. Education sociologist, Yoshihiro Shimizu, proposed that Japanese education policy was always without an aim except to cultivate and supply a good quality labor force (Platzer, 1988). By looking at the education policy and the Fundamental Law on Education, a "good quality labour force" means only that it is sufficiently academic to contribute to the

economy, and obedient enough to not be subversive in society. In other words, Japanese individual freedom has been subordinated to the national and economic interests.

Moreover, the message from the authorities, that well behaved students will have better education, and eventually, better lives, is nothing but a control mechanism for education.

Saito and Imai define this control of the Japanese education system as a promotion of “neo-nationalism” (Saito & Imai, 2004, p. 590).

Another important trend in education involves Japanese industries using early recruitment of university students. Since the end of the 1950s, because of rapid economic expansion, Japanese industries began recruiting university students long before they graduated. Due to the competition in recruitment by different companies, employers began sending their informal decision to hire students while still in their junior year. Since the students had not yet finished their college work, the companies apparently were unconcerned about the students’ work in university. The industries were hiring students simply on the basis of the personal interviews (Kosugi, 2009, pp. 63-64). This practice continues today, and as a result, many students attend university without any interest in cultivating their knowledge to liberate themselves.

As witnessed worldwide, education systems have become more economic-centered, with less promotion of democracy or guaranteeing basic rights. According to Nassbaum (2010), democracy allows society to include many parameters and to consider the differences among people. Although democracy needs to be built on the respect for others (p. 24), producing graduates only for the sake of economic development can only detract from the value systems in most societies. If the aim of all education is to achieve economic success, the cornerstone of democracy will be

short-lived. By considering Nassbaum's hypothesis, the intertwining of Japan's education system and universities with industry, presents a serious threat to functioning democracy in Japan. The last resort for upholding democracy, the universities, is no longer seen as a sphere of education in Japan.

Thus, from the support of industry, the Japanese education system has continued to use its rigid system since the Meiji era. Moreover, it has been kept in place because few young people who might be critical enough to produce progressive social change are being produced by the system.

Democracy in Jeopardy

The rigid, centralized education system has given all Japanese youth equal opportunities for education. At the same time; however, the system functions to conform all Japanese students, for example, by curricula that enforce a national standard and provides the identical value system through the courses and textbooks (Beauchamp & Vardaman, 1994). Basically, the teachers cannot choose what to teach, and must follow the decisions of the Ministry of Education. From the Ministry's guidance, the system produces obedient citizens. The system not only takes away academic freedom, but also removes the behavioral freedom of students, and seems to be undermining Japanese democracy. As a consequence, who will be able to question authority?

After comparing the government's policy on education from the 19th century to contemporary Japan, few changes have occurred since the 19th century. Leading up to World War II, Japanese education was used as propaganda to validate the sacrifice made by citizens for the sake of Japan, and to produce "unquestioning loyalty" to the state

(Yamashita & Williams, 2002, p. 279). After World War II, the authoritative control of education has been less obvious, though covert control continues to permeate the system. The strong implicit message is that, by failing to follow the education rules, people will eventually fail in life (Saito & Imai, 2004, p. 587). As a result, school children are treated like products requiring discipline, and teachers are little more than workers in the “education factory” (p. 588). According to Saito and Imai (2004), most Japanese students and adults have never experienced self-liberation from being educated. The greatest concern is that the situation allows Japan’s education to be strictly controlled by the government for its own purposes, and students seem to be unaware of their potential for freedoms that are otherwise being controlled by the government.

In the next chapter, I present excerpts from the interviews with young workers who were educated in prestigious Japanese colleges and who are now working at well established companies. The aim of the interviews were to ask “Were you aware of a significant level of control during your education experience?” Based on the interviews, I explored how the education system had affected their work lives. I also examine some of the problems that Japan is facing and consider whether or not they may have been partly caused by the Japanese education system.

Chapter 5: Consequences of Education in Contemporary Japan

In his book, *Democracy*, Anthony Arblaster (1987) introduced the problem of majority rule. In the political arena, Arblaster argued that equalization of “the will of the people with the will of the majority” is often justified (p. 68). He warns that the majority of people should not forget the existence of the minority, when policies are formed by majority rule (Arblaster, 1987). Nevertheless, what would happen if the minority concealed itself? Or worse, what if the minority felt pressure to conform to the majority, but could not so, and decided to be invisible from the rest of society instead of voicing their opinions? How could the majority of people consider the existence of the minority? If the minorities are invisible to the majority, how can they be aware of the problems of democracy? This situation has been occurring in Japan since the high growth period of the Japanese economy.

Various social problems are present in contemporary Japan. Two situations in particular seem to be unique outcomes of the Japanese education system. The first is called the hidden youths (*Hikikomori*): where the youths have withdrawn from society. The second situation is the epidemically high rate of suicide and mental disorders in Japan. To highlight these situations, this chapter draws extensively on my primary research, gathered from 10 interviews of workers, and from 2 professionals in organizations, who are now working with *Hikikomori* and with individuals with mental disorders.

The Voice of Mainstream Japanese Young Workers

What do young Japanese workers feel about the education system? I conducted interviews with young Japanese workers who represent the mainstream Japanese youth. The interviewees had graduated from Japanese prestigious universities and entered traditional industries, where the traditional style of life-long employment is still recognized, though less systematically than it once was.²⁵

A set of questions was focused on why all of the new university graduates were wearing the same kind of suit at their job interviews. Understandably, candidates usually wore formal clothes for their job interviews, like in other countries but, as noted earlier, Japanese graduates always wore exactly the same kind of suit (with identical hairstyles). Each year in October, when companies begin holding information sessions for new graduates, large numbers of students gather in company hallways, wearing identical suits, as if they were soldiers marching in unison.

Most of the interviewees I selected were mainstream Japanese workers. I wanted to learn about what the workers observed about their surrounding systems in Japan. Also, I was interested in whether or not the interviewees had any doubts about the Japanese education system that they had gone through. Had the system been easy or hard for them? What motivated them to keep up with the mainstream? I wanted to test my hypothesis about the education system making citizens act obediently without asking questions. Also, I wanted to learn if they had ever considered taking a different route, besides the mainstream, and if so, why?

²⁵ See Appendix B for the basic outline of the interviews.

The first interviewee was a 28-year-old female worker, who had graduated from the most prestigious high school in her hometown, and from one of the highest ranked private universities. She explained how she ended up wearing the same clothes as the others for her job interview:

Seminars were held almost every week when you entered your junior year in university. Career counselors would teach you what to wear at the interview. Since I am a woman, I was told to wear a black suit with a skirt, not pants. A blouse must be white. A bag should be black with a wide bottom so that it would stay on the floor steadily when you put down the bag. Short hair was welcomed, but if you have long hair, the hair should be bound up in the back of your head. We even had a lecture on how to use make-up for the interview. There was a thick textbook just for preparing for the interview. It was called “The Excellent Model Answers for Your Job Interview” or something like that.²⁶

From her comments, it seemed to be acceptable for students to wear colors other than black if they wanted to enter the field of cosmetics or design, but this was not the case for students who wanted to enter a “traditional” industry. I asked her if she ever questioned why she had to follow all the “rules,” even though no laws or regulations were in place to control what she might wear at an interview. She said:

Uh, that’s an interesting question. I have never thought of it that way. Yeah, you are right. I have never heard or read of companies actually requiring what a person should wear for an interview. Well, it was just the way everybody was

²⁶ All interview excerpts are from my translations.

doing it. It was an automatic thing... If the school said so, we believed it might be better to listen to them.

I also asked her if she would care if the interviewee's bag was white instead of black and she said:

No. Now, I wonder what in the world all that myth came from. They even had recommendations about the height of heels. Oh, and the color must be black, of course. The suggestions by no means guarantee getting the job. I considered it just basic common sense that we all should know about before going to the interview.

After six years of real-world experience, she seemed to be re-thinking her job interview for the first time. She said that if I had not asked her these questions, she would never have realized the ritual of the rules. Moreover, she regretted that she wasted almost two years of her college life to prepare for job interviews, and yet, remembered little about what she had studied at university.²⁷

I interviewed a male worker, who had graduated from a famous private junior and high school and who attended a prestigious national university, I asked him if he ever felt that he should not speak his opinion. He said, "If your question refers to work, well, work is a place where you don't want to speak out unless you have 100% assurance that it will convince somebody." For him, it was the smartest way to avoid getting into trouble with the organization. When asked what kind of skills his company required when it hires new university graduates, he said that students should be smart enough to have common knowledge and not be subversive. I asked him what was the common knowledge, and he

²⁷ The interviews were conducted in Fukuoka, Japan in the first week of August, 2010.

said, “Well, isn’t that the basic knowledge of history and math?” I asked him if he was aware of a dispute about the historic events between Japan and other Asian nations with regards to World War II. He said,

Of course, I know. However, either interpretation won’t matter because, for the examination, especially for the university’s entrance examination, they will not cover contemporary Japan... I mean 20th century Japan. So, even in school, teachers don’t elaborate on the details... especially the history after the Russo-Japanese War. It’s not important because it won’t be covered on an entrance examination.²⁸

Interestingly, they were also surprised by my questions, not necessarily the context of the questions, but the realization of being unaware of some issues. In general, they said that they had always been busy preparing for examinations since they were in elementary school. As a result, they had no time to think about their education as a system. Their goal had always been to get into university, and eventually, to get into a stable industry. Once they began working, with long work hours, they had no time to think about the meaning of their education. In terms of knowledge, they seemed to know about most of Japan’s historical events up to the early-20th century. For later eras, however, they had little knowledge, making comments like, “they hadn’t learned it in school.” Of the ten workers interviewed, three told me that they really liked to read historical novels. These interviewees appeared to have a relatively deep knowledge of events after 1868, though it was derived from novels, and not from schooling.

²⁸ He added that he remembered to spend so much time to memorize the names of tumuli and farming techniques around 4th century Japan.

I also asked the interviewees about their thoughts on democracy. Most were surprised at the question, and wondered if I might be some kind of a political agitator. For the interviewees, ideas like democracy or socialism were dangerous notions only for abhorrent nerds who were against the death penalty or who belonged to the group of hard-core feminists. I asked them to explain. One interviewee said, “I don’t know. I just never heard people discuss those things around me.” Another said, “People who usually talk about democracy are hermits, like intellectuals, aren’t they?” The comments from the small sample (only 10 interviewees) might not represent the majority of Japanese, though the interviewees were all successful in the mainstream society, and they had few doubts about not being ideal workers.

The following questions seemed difficult for the interviewees to answer. Their difficulties were not due to the meanings of the question, but because they seemed to be searching for answers that they may have wanted me to hear:

What does a member of an organization mean to you?

What is your definition of individuality and conformity?

A 38-year-old male worker responded, “An organization is security.” I then asked him what would happen if the organization disappeared. He said, “Until then, it is the most secure place. I would think about the consequences after the organization is in danger of disappearing.” In responding to the second question, he claimed that individuality was not well recognized in society. I asked an interviewee if Japanese youths enjoy their freedom in society, and he replied:

Youths have too much freedom. That is the problem Japan is now facing. Youths are less and less able to assume their responsibilities in society, and society is

granting them too much freedom. The strict examination system and dress codes are necessary, otherwise, how would the youths learn discipline?

I raised the topic of the government's thought control during World War II, and asked an interviewee if he felt it might happen again. He replied, "No one on the globe has the guts to start a world war again. It's not going to happen, especially for Japan, even if there is thought control." His reply suggested that the question itself did not make sense to him.

Most of the interviewees had never felt that they were oppressed by the authorities during their careers. Nevertheless, they all indicated that they had felt a lot of pressure in the entrance examinations. In any case, because of the examination system, many people can be involved in studying for a period of their lives. The interviewees believed that if Japan eliminated the examination system, there would be no way to discipline the youths, and society would be in turmoil. For the interviewees, entrance examinations and strict rules for education are a necessary evil. Overall, the interviewees admitted that their student lives were arduous. Because of their experiences; however, they felt they could put up with hardships in the real world after graduation. One interviewee said, "If youths learn discipline at a young age, they can avoid being selfish workers who might not fit into the company, like teamwork."

To paint a picture of Japanese society, I borrow Foucault's expression, that people, who have gone through the same disciplinary method, are confined to certain "compartments" insidiously (Foucault, 1975, p. 147). Since mobilization of people in the different hierarchical compartments is allowed, where they feel less restricted. The

mainstream Japanese are trying to stay in their compartments for as long as possible, while the marginalized Japanese are trying to confine themselves in the mainstream compartment. Eventually, the lives of individuals become part of the whole system, and everyone is trying to be in the mainstream compartment.

I also interviewed an official at the Human Resources Department to find out what kind of employees are preferred by the company. I asked him what he felt was the most important aspect in deciding whom to hire. He said that they had many criteria for selecting new graduates, and though they were confidential, he indicated that the basic thing was a “common knowledge test.” If applicants received a low grade, they were ruled out. The official went on to say that they held interviews with those who passed the test. In the interviewing process, the official might decide to reject a candidate, based on the official’s opinion, if an applicant seemed to be overly humble or overly self-assured:

... Those kinds of students are difficult to train after they enter our company. If students are too modest, then they cannot compete with others, whereas, if students are too self-confident, they are likely to demean the teamwork.

The official may also represent the recruitment style used in other industries. In any case, if such criteria are used widely, the universities, with the mission to send graduates into industry, may be systemizing their approach for producing graduates for industry. For example, a prestigious university might attempt to send graduates to prestigious companies. Moreover, high school education, which is focused on rote memory work, helps students pass entrance exams for prestigious universities, but the system seems to be rigid and intertwined. The goal is to keep graduates within the narrow

mainstream in Japan, without building on the existing school system or the needs of industry.

In the next section, I introduce some of the scholars' points of view about Japanese schools.

Schools as an Active Agent of the Authorities

The Goblins school is only one example of an important phenomenon: the development, in the classical period, of a new technique for taking charge of the time of individual existence; for regulating the relations of time, bodies and forces; for assuring an accumulation of duration; and for turning to ever-increased profit or use the movement of passing time (Foucault, 1975, p. 157).

To some extent, all scholars characterize Japanese students as being obedient. Analyzing how schools and teachers are acting in the system is the key to understanding the characterization of Japanese students. For Japanese educator, Teruhisa Horio, the education system produces two kinds of young people. The first is comprised of students who feel they have been cast aside by society; the second is comprised of those who feel that studying is like kicking "all the potential rivals down into the mud." (Horio, 1988, p. 299) Horio sees the education system as not only turning teachers into agents of the managerial control apparatus, but as destroying the teachers' prestige and pedagogic authority (Horio, 1988). According to Horio:

...in contemporary Japanese society, education is organized so as to make sure that the overwhelming majority of students never grow up to become the kind of

citizens who will demand much of anything, least of all their political and intellectual rights (Horio, 1988, p. 4).

Students are locked away in a small world called school. Because schools enrol all Japanese children without exception, the school system successfully is enabled to train them effectively. Eventually, the system creates obedient citizens, with little chance of internal turmoil. For the authorities, the outcome is ideal and convenient. Nevertheless, if citizens demand anything, especially in politics, the resulting scenario would be the worst since the 1930s.

The works of three foreign scholars who support these claims about Japanese students all agree about the schools' supportive role for Japanese authorities. First, Edwin O. Reischauer, a historian and ambassador to Japan from 1961 to 1966, offered three explanations for Japanese being accused of lacking intellectual creativity: 1) an inadequate university system; 2) use of rote memory in early education; and 3) the conformist nature of Japanese society (Reischauer, 1977, p. 200). According to Reischauer, the Japanese university system is inadequate, since four years of university life was "a long breather between the pressure cooker atmosphere of the school system and the rat race of office life after graduation." (p. 197) Consequently, Japanese students never have a chance to learn how to be intellectually creative.

Second, Bryan McVeigh, a political scientist who taught in Japan, maintained that Japanese students are most interested in being obedient and uncritical (McVeigh, 2002). For Japanese students, the education experience is not only boring, "but distressing, disturbing, and harassing." (p. 96) McVeigh also suggested that Japanese education

contributed to a form of nationalism. Students in schools, without exception, learn perseverance, endurance, and a demanding regime of test preparation, without studying (p. 128). According to McVeigh, the hidden curriculum, which values harmony and cooperation, also hides the class divisions in Japan (p. 134). By blurring class divisions, promoting the notion of “Japaneseness” is more convenient since all people are to be good workers and ideal citizens (p. 131). The blurring of class divisions has also contributed to persuading the people that Japan is a perfectly egalitarian state.

Third, an international education scholar, William K. Cummings, maintained that schools, from elementary to high schools, greatly influence the young people’s values in Japan, compared to the influence in other nations (Cummings, 1982). Looking at the school curriculum, Japanese school children spend more time at school, compared to children in any other country. Cummings compared Japan to the US, and noted that the US has 180 school days, while Japan has 240 school days. According to the author, the schools in Japan need to be open longer so that students can digest the abundance of government programs (pp. 22-29).

As many scholars pointed out, Japanese schools have active roles in supporting the authorities’ criteria. I now refer to an obvious example of how Japanese schools are overly concerned with meeting the curriculum quotas from the educational authorities. In 2009, the world epidemic of the H1N1 flu reached Japan, causing schools to be closed for at least a week, after a single student became infected. Because of the loss of school days that year, the schools made up the difference by shortening the winter holiday or adding extra hours each day (*Yomiuri Newspaper*, January 7, 2010, Education section). Because the curriculum must be identical across the education system in Japan, elementary and

junior high schools need to extend their school hours so that students will be able to digest the required curriculum. To meet the requirements of the authorities, schools exert extreme pressure on students to stay on the mainstream path.

In the next section, I introduce a social problem called *Hikikomori*, as one of the consequences of the extreme pressure on students.

The Japanese Epidemic of Socially Withdrawn Hidden Youths (*Hikikomori*)

For the purpose of this thesis, a minority is defined as a group of Japanese people who are not mainstream Japanese citizens, and who would never express their opinions that might be marginal. By “not mainstream Japanese,” I mean the one million “hidden youths” (*Hikikomori*) who have withdrawn from Japanese society (Borovoy, 2008, p. 552). They have resisted social conformity by their total withdrawal from society (p. 553). Although they are not seen as rebels, they have simply brushed off all of their connections with society (not working, not in school), and have been staying at home for years. Because the education system values “obedience, discipline, self-inhibition and group harmony,” (p. 553) the hidden youths think they are different from ordinary students and that they have no way of expressing themselves in society (p. 552). The hidden youths are also too afraid of being “different” or “distinguished” from others in society and prefer to conceal themselves in their own world. As a result, the hidden youths are not seen by the rest of the mainstream Japanese.

How can the majority of mainstream Japanese notice the minorities? According to Arblaster (1987), the majority of people should not forget the minority; however, the hidden youths are invisible to the majority. Eventually, the majority will start believing

that society is homogeneous, to sustain the “cohesive, protective and secure society” (p. 552). The majority would be eager to conform, and might ignore the possible presence of minorities in Japanese society. Because the hidden youth minority is never seen in society, the illusion is created that one of the ideal notions of democracy as consensus is at work in Japan.

The hidden youth phenomenon has been studied by various scholars. According to Dr. Alan R. Teo, its history dates to 1978, when it was called “withdrawal neurosis.” In the late-1980s, the term, “hidden-youths” (*Hikikomori*) was used (Teo, 2009, p. 179). In the literature, *Hikikomori* has been studied by various psychiatrists, teachers, and counselors. Most authors, besides suggesting that the *Hikikomori* should return back into society, have implied that some Japanese traditions may have caused the *Hikikomori* problem.

For example, anthropologist Sachiko Kaneko claimed that Japanese society imposed strict rules that have pressured the youths who could not follow them (Kaneko, 2006). Also, psychologist Yuichi Hattori indicated that the Japanese traditional style, with its oppressive child-rearing and education, can cause youths to become socially withdrawn (*Hikikomori*) (Hattori, 2005). The youths feel as if they cannot show their personalities in front of their peers or their parents for the fear of being rejected by a society to which they cannot adapt (p. 189).

As an extension to the research mentioned above, I interviewed Mr. Mikio Choami, an organizer of a non-profit organization (NPO), the Collegium for Educational Culture, who has been dealing with *Hikikomori* youths and their parents for more than 15

years. The purpose of the interview was to learn why the *Hikikomori* youths have given up on society.

Mr. Choami, whose two daughters were members of the hidden youths, began his position at the NPO in 1996 as an organizer of a session mainly for fathers. His organization has received much media attention since then. Mr. Choami also supervises a city council for unattended school children (*Hikikomori* usually withdraw from school, before withdrawing from society). Mr. Choami, who is in his 60s, also teaches university courses dealing with the *Hikikomori* phenomenon, raising questions about how individuals can become more connected to each other in society.

Why do today's youths seem to blame themselves instead of blaming the society or the system, as was seen in the student movements of the 1960s and 1970s?²⁹ If, in fact, Japanese education has not changed since the 19th century, causing people to conform, why did the earlier student movements take place, and why have contemporary youths not shown the same kind of behavior. Mr. Choami's views were as follows:

War was abhorrent to our parents' generation. The abhorrence of war was an established philosophy for them as any war was unacceptable for any reason. During the 60s and 70s, war was still realistic to us, because only a couple of decades had passed since the war had ended. As young university students, if we felt that the media or government policy was too nationalistic, then we felt confident about stopping them. After all, politics was much closer to our daily lives than it is today. The reason why today's youths do not have the same

²⁹ 1968 at the height of student movements, University Control Bill and Subversive Activities Prevention Law were enforced by the support of industrial firms. All the student movements were suppressed and it marked the escalation of surveillance in the society (Halliday, 1975, pp. 251-261).

mentality is partly the fault of our generation. Unlike our parents' generation, we quit talking about "check the authority to avoid war" mentality. That was too risky for our children. Instead, I wanted my children to study in school, get into a prestigious university and get a good paying job as had done during Japan's economic development era.

The reason why the movement was not so popular anymore as it was in the 1970s was because of the start of the economic boom in Japan. Why should we fight with the authority when the authority was assuring us of a secure life? It was a worse mentality than "If you can't beat them, join them." As a matter of fact, we were eager to join them.

I asked him if his parenting affected his children's *Hikikomori*.

Yes, definitely. I used to tell my children about what I did when I was young as a hero story. Nevertheless, what I turned out to be was a company soldier who valued money and social status. In retrospect, my kids were disappointed in me when they realized that what I did was different from what I told them. When my children first showed me a sign of not wanting to go to school, I told them, "For MY sake, you just go to school." I never thought of what my children wanted. All I cared about was how I might be perceived by my peers in society if my children didn't go to school. That was the most regrettable moment of my life.³⁰

³⁰ The interview was conducted in Fukuoka, Japan on 22nd of August, 2011.

Mr. Choami has since quit his job to stay with his children and to prepare for beginning his new life's work as a facilitator for the youths, so that they can express their feelings more freely.

I asked Mr. Choami if he thought that Japan's education system might be playing a role in destroying one of the fundamental characteristics of democracy; specifically, freedom of speech, and he commented:

I'm very interested in Denmark. I visited there a couple times as a researcher, appointed by the Fukuoka City Council. I admire Denmark, not only for its policy-making, but also for its education system. When I asked the principal of an elementary school about the main aim of his school, he said he wanted to create a fun place for kids, and everything else was not important. I was shocked by his comment. In Japan, schools only care about their appearance. The appearance means how obedient, docile, and high scoring the children seem to be. When I talked to my daughter's teacher after she stopped going to school, the teacher advised me that the school did not want to become involved in the problem that my daughter had. The teacher encouraged my daughter to transfer to another school where these kinds of kids can go. At the time, I decided to help my kids on my own. After all, it isn't just the system, but it's us, as agents of the system, who are destroying Japan's democracy.

Although Mr. Choami did not use the term, "democracy," until after I mentioned it, he agreed that the idea of democracy is to respect various opinions about everything.

He pointed out that what he is doing now is to re-consider democracy, which should have been done a long time ago.

The above case fits with Foucault's argument about how people become conformed by discipline. For Foucault, conformity is a form of punishment, but it is not used for "expiation" or "repression" (Foucault, 1975, p. 182). Rather, people become eager to achieve conformity on their own (p. 183). For Mr. Choami, despite his past experience as a member of the students' movement, he strongly recommended conformity to his children. He also might not discern any expiation or repression of authority, though he was eager to be a member of the conforming mainstream. In contrast, the *Hikikomori* youths might detect a "constant pressure" (p. 182) from the authorities to be "like one another" (p. 182). The *Hikikomori* youths likely tried, but failed, to conform to the mainstream Japanese students. Furthermore, if we look at the phenomenon of the *Hikikomori*, Foucault's hypothesis suggests how the authority's mechanics of power are born to "have a hold over the others." (p. 138) The *Hikikomori* youths rejected being embedded into the system, even though Foucault's "political anatomy" had been perfectly established in Japanese society. Because of their lack of conformity, the *Hikikomori* youths consider themselves to be different, and worse, the majority of people also consider them to be "different," and fail to understand them.

Ironically, because the *Hikikomori* were originally considered to have a kind of neurosis at the beginning, their parents attempted to help them, but only as an agent of the authority. Usually, the parents of the *Hikikomori* youths seek help from psychiatrists, psychologists, and local health centers or self-help groups (Kaneko, 2006). The parents who want to help their children, typically seek professionals who can encourage their

children to return to society (p. 235). This illustrates why the *Hikikomori* phenomenon is especially tragic. The parents, who are usually closest to the *Hikikomori* youths, are acting as the agents in the “mechanics of power.” Consequently, the *Hikikomori* youths feel even more alone in the society, and in the world at large.

The current Japanese society does not seem to suit the *Hikikomori* youths. In the 1960s and 1970s, the youths of the day may have thought they could change society, though ultimately, they were not successful. Subsequently, the youths became embedded into the society, in which they did not fit. Today’s youths might not be as angry as were their parents’ generation, but today’s youths still hide themselves from the society because they cannot find any place to fit in. Many researchers, and individuals like Mr. Choami, seem to put the blame on their own generation for creating the *Hikikomori* youths. Nevertheless, what if society could realize that forcing conforming behavior was not democratic? What if society learnt that the presence of minorities is a predictable outcome of democracy? Even when the government tries to conform citizens in a certain way, as long as the people know that some individuals cannot conform, then democracy would make sense in Japan. The existence of minorities would be accepted and respected. For this to happen, and for citizens to learn to accept and respect minorities, education is the key.

Japanese Authority and the Hidden Youth (*Hikikomori*)

In 2001, Japan’s national broadcaster, NHK, ran a series called “*Hikikomori* Support Channel,” which allowed the *Hikikomori* to be widely known to the public. In the program, many youths were invited to discuss the issues, through fax and email, with

a few former *Hikikomori* youths. One of the former *Hikikomori* youths, Kazuki Ueyama, analyzed the cause for his *Hikikomori* years:

Although I was a straight A student in elementary school, when I entered the 8th grade, I suddenly became afraid when thinking about my future. I had been working so hard, as if I couldn't breathe, but I couldn't imagine if I had to continue this hardship for the rest of my life. It was the life I had been taught, like running on one long train rail. I didn't want to be a grown-up. How far could I go on the only allowable way of life?

I'm really interested in education reform now. In schools, the evaluation axe is the only one. If education teaches children about the existence of many other choices in their lifestyle, the future of the children will be brighter, and the problems with the *Hikikomori* youth will decrease.³¹

Although the situation and the ages of individuals differ for the youths, they generally see a dead-end. The youths seem to be unable to see other choices in their lives, thus, they either withdraw from society or act as society expects them to act. Again, if society can accept individual differences and allow them to have choices, the *Hikikomori* youths may be able to return to a more open lifestyle.

The situation has become even more convenient for the authorities, since the voiceless “rebels” have chosen to hide themselves, or they develop mental illnesses. If a major cause of the high suicide rate in Japan is depression, it would seem logical to

³¹ Welfare Network Hikikomori Information “The voice of your heart” <http://www.nhk.or.jp/fnet/hikikomori/2002-2005>. My translation.

address the root cause of the depression. This explains the importance of the role of experts in treating mental illness. Without a remedy, the minorities may never be able to enter society. After all, the Japanese government has been able to create the illusion of an egalitarian state, where mainstream Japanese citizens can share, or appear to share, the same value system, with little concern for the minorities.

Because of the media attention, the *Hikikomori* have become well known to society. Even the Cabinet Office has begun researching the *Hikikomori* issue. According to the conclusions from the field survey of the Cabinet Office; however, the situation is completely different from the above description, and completely different from the findings of most researchers. Apparently, the Cabinet Office does not want to deal in a serious way with the hidden youths.

The field survey was conducted by Yusuke Takatsuka, a professor of Myojyo University for a report to the Cabinet Office in 2010. According to Takatsuka, the number of *Hikikomori* youths was 696,000. His conclusions were as follows:

1. Contemporary *Hikikomori* youths are different from the youths of 30 years ago. [During the 1980s], the youths felt more apathy, emptiness, and depression.
2. Students who stop attending schools have a tendency to become *Hikikomori* in the future.
3. Defining the *Hikikomori* as having impairments, disabilities, or handicaps may be suitable in some cases.
4. The contemporary value system in human relations is one of the causes for the *Hikikomori* youths, who do not have good relationships with their peers.
5. The *Hikikomori* youths have personalities which are serious and inflexible, and they have poor communication and social skills.

6. The *Hikikomori* have an argumentative characteristic that differs from the characteristics of youths in earlier eras.
7. The *Hikikomori* youths do not accept the opinions of others, and do not want to be told what to do.
8. Of the surveyed *Hikikomori* youths, 55.9% said that they felt constrained in school (i.e., preferred to stay at home).

Takatsuka indicated that his research represented 1,550,000 youths who could become *Hikikomori*. Further research is needed to understand the population of *Hikikomori-to-be* youths, to address the *Hikikomori* problem in Japan.³²

Based on the survey, the blame for the *Hikikomori* problems seem to be placed with the *Hikikomori* themselves, which ignores any fault by the schools or society. The characteristics of the *Hikikomori* youths, according to Takatsuka, seem to involve selfishness, self-centeredness, and worse, mental disability. He did, however, mention that the contemporary value system was a possible cause of the *Hikikomori* phenomenon, but only in that the contemporary value system impeded the forming of individual relationships. Thus, contemporary society is implied to be more self-centered than it was before. Although the publication was an official report of the Cabinet Office, it neglected to suggest any proposals for the *Hikikomori* phenomenon, and only indicated a need for further study. The government does not appear to be interested in finding solutions and the report seemed to be only a brief response from the government. Although the phenomenon has been known for more than 30 years, how many more years of “further study” are needed to address the problem? The authorities’ reluctant attitude supports the

³² Report for the *Hikikomori* Investigation, 2010, Section 3. My translation.

view that no-one, not even the government, seriously considers the minorities and the meaning of democracy in Japan.

In sum, though the *Hikikomori* have been recognized since the 1980s, they have not been the focus of media attention until the early-2000s. The government's report was not publicized until 2010, with its focus on the problems of *Hikikomori* youths, without considering the overall system or the youths' environment. If researchers had listened to just one *Hikikomori* voice, the report could have been completely different. From the perspective of the *Hikikomori*, they seem to be only partly to blame for the problem; the mainstream Japanese people are also at the root of the problem, and their attitude that the *Hikikomori* do not exist is no help. Members of the mainstream Japanese population, who are more aware of the *Hikikomori*, understand that the youths are no longer able to conform to the mainstream. The education system in the schools and universities has taught Japanese citizens how to be ideal citizens and ideal workers. If the citizens ignore the tragedy of the *Hikikomori*, the future of Japanese society is in jeopardy.

Surviving in the Mainstream/ Dropping Out from the Mainstream

All the activity of the disciplined individual must be punctuated and sustained by injunctions whose efficacy rests in brevity and clarity; the order does not need to be explained or formulated; it must trigger off the required behavior and that is enough (Foucault, 1975, p. 166).

Most of those who survive the education system and remain in the mainstream are considered as ideal citizens by the government. After all, the government wishes to maintain a homogeneous society without turmoil. Although my hypothesis is that the

education system has impeded the establishment of democracy in Japan, the people may still be exposed to pressures to conform after they enter the real world. In another interview with a counsellor at a middle-sized company, the pressures for conformity that go beyond the schools, can be witnessed among employees.

The company had increasing numbers of employees with mental problems and had decided to hire a counsellor (Mr. Tanaka, a pseudonym). I asked Mr. Tanaka if the employees with mental problems showed any typical characteristics. He said that those with depression seemed to be no-nonsense types, who never failed in their lives. I asked him what he meant by “never failed in their lives,” and he continued:

A person, who never fails to pass an examination to enter a college or a company, I define as a never-fail person. I intentionally say “never fail” and not “successful.” Those who never fail feel as if they are successful, somehow. They are not satisfied by their current situation, and most of them never come back to work.³³

Although Mr. Tanaka is not in charge of the company training program, he showed me the company’s rule book, which included the following:

Employees have to be punctual when they do their work.

Employees should not wear improper clothes.

Employees should work in a cheerful way.

Employees should have organized desks...

I asked him if the rule book sounded somewhat like an elementary school rule book, and he agreed, though he defended the company, saying:

³³ The interview was conducted in Fukuoka, Japan on 23rd of August, 2011.

Well, we had subversive employees before, and the company is now very careful to govern its employees by making as many rules as possible.

I also asked him about himself. What did he think about all the employees acting in the same way? Did he think the rule book was working? Why did all the new graduates wear exactly the same clothes when they had job interviews for example? He replied:

All of the people, including myself, do not know that there is a choice. Well, we might know in some sense, but we have never been taught that it is all right to make a choice. Besides, with what we are told about a better choice, we feel, “Why bother? Let’s have what others are having.” I have never thought that there should be more choices.

Understandably, because Mr. Tanaka is an employee of the company, he was reluctant to say something against the company. Still, as a counsellor for employees who may be depressed, he typically only encourages them to go back to “normal life,” even though they might not be suited for it. As Mr. Tanaka mentioned, most of the depressed employees eventually quit their jobs. After years of conforming at their schools, the employees must continue conforming in their work environments where they spend most of their time. If the company really wants its employees to be healthy, allowing them a little more freedom in the organization might be helpful. According to Mr. Tanaka, the main reason he was hired was to avoid the worst scenario, where employees might commit suicide, which would be detrimental to the company’s reputation.

Officially, the company manager might claim to be avoiding disputes between labor and management, by using a detailed company rule book that has strict guidelines

for employees. Nevertheless, losing the workforce through mental illnesses and hiring counselors in the short-term, would destroy the company in the long-run. In fact, giving employees more freedom in the workforce is worth trying since a more detailed company rule book would not reduce the number of employees with mental disorders. Rather, it sounded like the number of problems was increasing with the thickness of the rule book.

In 1978, 20,788 Japanese people committed suicide. Since then, the numbers have increased, reaching 30,000 in 1998 (National Police Agency, 2009). According to the Japanese National Police report, every year, more than 30,000 Japanese people committed suicide from 1998 to 2007 (Wiseman, 2008).³⁴ If we look at the ratio per population, Japan's suicide rate is dramatically high. According to the World Health Organization's report, 11.3 per 100,000 committed suicide in Canada in 2004, whereas, the figure was 24.4 per 100,000 in Japan, in the same year.³⁵ When recognizing the high suicide rate in Japan (7th highest in population ratio among researched nations, according to the WHO report³⁶), it is worthwhile to consider the possible relationship between the high suicide rate and the social settings.

According to the National Police Agency (2009), the suicide rate is correlated to the unemployment rate. Moreover, 68% of all suicides occur among those between 30 and 60 years of age, long after the school age. In Japan, cities with the highest suicide rates are the 12 major cities where most workers are engaged in tertiary, rather than primary industries.³⁷ Workers with higher levels of education mainly enter the tertiary

³⁴ The figure for 2008 was 32,845. National Police Agency, *General Description on Suicide*, May, 2009.

³⁵ http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/country_reports/en/index.html

³⁶ Canada is 38th.

³⁷ National Police Agency, *General Description on Suicide*, June, 2008.

industries. Possibly, those with more education tend to feel more pressure to stay in Japan's mainstream. Japan's suicide rate has remained high perhaps because of the authorities to maintain a homogeneous society, and despite its campaign for egalitarianism. The Japanese type of egalitarianism is supposed to make citizens happier. Nevertheless, if the aims of the education system and workplaces were less focused on national conformity and economic success, and more focused on enhancing individuality, students might learn more about their freedom of choice, possibly curtailing the *Hikikomori* problem and the high suicide rate. Society might also realize that the "minorities" in society may be able to understand the pitfalls of the pressure for conformity.

As illustrated by Foucault's quotation at the beginning of this section, the mainstream Japanese are conforming without any questions. One might ask which group of people best represents the characteristics of democracy: mainstream Japanese or the hidden youths? The obvious answer is the hidden youths, who can relate to the existence of both the majority and the minority. The mainstream Japanese have been indoctrinated to conform by the political structures, while the hidden youths, a minority, resist passively to the authorities.

Japanese authorities have conveniently kept the people together by prescribing explicit and implicit rules. Nevertheless, the recent increase in suicides and the hidden youths situation suggests that mainstream Japanese are less able to stick to the narrow path. Those who deviate from the mainstream also tend to lose their voices in society. The situation could be called the fall of democracy.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The lack of positive objection was interpreted as consent... Silence means consent... Consent... is too passive and restrictive a conception to provide an adequate account of the proper role of the people in a democracy (Arblaster, 1987, pp. 92-93).

Although the exact definition of democracy is not agreed upon, in general, we consider a democratic society to be one that allows people to express their opinions freely without fear or restraint. Still, it can be dangerous if people fail to notice that “free discussions” are being manipulated by the authorities. To ensure democracy, some level of education among the people is necessary and the process of democracy must be scrutinized. Only through education, can people be aware that they are targeted by propaganda, and be able to resist authority if it goes awry. Unfortunately, the education system, under the guise of legitimate liberal democratic political structure in Japan, a fundamental requirement for democracy, has been skewed by governmental authorities and the economic powers since the 19th century. Equal access to education has become a perfect mechanism for the Japanese state to capture as many citizens as possible in its will to consent: consent is not uniquely Japanese, but is a political project of the state.

In Japanese society, where consent is highly valued, discussion is discouraged and devalued in education. When the authorities are determined to impose their wishes on the people, they can easily mould the citizens systematically rather than encourage and stimulate provocative discussion. The Japanese government has been systematically

working on moulding obedient citizens through its direct involvement in education since the 19th century.

Japanese citizens tend to conform without recognizing the constraints being imposed by the authorities. The people tend to censor themselves, because of the repeated lessons on moral education and the rigid entrance examinations that infuse Japanese students with certain values from a young age. Besides the preference for uncritical students in the education system, obedient workers are also welcomed into Japan's industries. Many scholars warn that when education becomes merely a training center for workers for economic development, it will destroy the foundation of democracy and serve the emergence of an authoritarian regime, much like the path Japan took in the 1930s.

With the rigid guidelines for education, conformity is still being valued throughout Japan under the guise of making a harmonious society. Because of the endless indoctrination towards conformity, the people are acquiescing without question and trying desperately to stay within the mainstream Japanese society. When Japanese youths believe their fashions and lifestyles are unique, compared to their peers, they fail to realize that they always end up wearing the same kind of clothes and live the same kind of lifestyle. The people have become complacent to conform, rather than attempting to reveal their individual character. In Japanese society, most citizens fail to realize that a difference exists between equality and conformity.

According to Arblaster (1987), consenting without objections cannot provide people with a proper role in democracy. In fact, a passive attitude towards consent may threaten the existence of democracy, since passivity might be interpreted as obedience.

Although obedient citizens might be desirable to eliminate social turmoil, is a stable society an ideal society? Would a liberal democratic society ignore the self-sacrificing minorities? When Japan entered World War II, the voice of the minorities was whitewashed by the authorities. Even though support for the war was expressed by the mainstream, they were aware of the possible defeat and devastation. If Japan continues to mould democracy in its own way, the country could repeat the same mistakes as those made in the 1930s. Appealing democracy just by the form of government cannot claim that the nation is fully democratic. Japan's legitimate democratic political regime definitely cannot guarantee to give freedom or to protect freedom to the people of Japan.

Japan officially pursued a democratic political system, with the elimination of the class system and implementation of a parliamentary system in the 19th century. Merely adopting a democratic political institution without scrutiny does not necessarily make Japan a fully democratic nation. For example, Japan easily transformed into a militaristic imperial state in the 1930s. After its devastating defeat, Japan thoroughly adopted liberal democracy, not only politically, but socially as well, under US control. Nevertheless, the education system, which taught citizens obedience and an uncritical attitude to conform, managed to survive even after the total loss of previously held beliefs and values. The seven years of American occupation could not undermine the Japanese authorities' strong belief that education had to be state-centered and serve as the moral core for the people.

The impetus for rebuilding the nation and the rigid education system became more intimately intertwined with Japanese industry after the war era. To avoid turmoil, industries preferred non-subversive employees. The mutual interests of the government and industry were perfectly realized as Japan was rebuilding its nation. Because of the

lengthy training in school, Japanese people understood that dissenting opinions would not create harmony, a value they were taught to treasure above all. The rigid system, used to produce a certain kind of citizen, has survived since the 19th century.

After the nation's rebuilding process was complete, the people of contemporary Japan began noticing the existence of an ideal notion of mainstream Japanese. The hidden *Hikikomori* youths, who considered themselves to be marginalized from the mainstream, tended to detach themselves from society as a whole. They would never come out of their homes until they felt they belonged in the mainstream, though their family members encouraged them to assimilate with the rest of society. Japan has been experiencing a notoriously high suicide rate, compared to the rest of the world since its economic downturn in the 1990s. Some economically marginalized people, because of the high rates of unemployment, have chosen suicide. Such a behavior pattern could be interpreted as a ramification of the people's inability to openly voice their concerns or organize collectively to protest against laying-offs by employers. For them, the only way out is to end their own lives.

A liberal education plays a vital role in providing opportunities for people to be free from internal and external restrictions. As Dewey (1916) stated, democracy cannot be achieved without education. Nevertheless, an authoritative power can still insidiously exercise its agenda through education. Japan's condition serves as proof of what Michel Foucault described in his book, "Discipline and Punish." Once people are trained to act and believe in a certain way, it is difficult to reverse the conditioning. Eventually, people will not question the status quo, even though it restricts their freedom. In Japan, people

have become eager to achieve the goals of the authorities, with their obedience and complacency.

Education is supposed to provide people with opportunities to scrutinize the significance of their freedom and the meaning of democracy. The widely known Japanese characteristic of being highly disciplined is the result of training under the authoritarian education system: a system that has been sustained by political and economic authorities since the 19th century. If the mistakes that led Japan to war in the 1930s fail to serve as lessons for the future, history may repeat itself. If the masses can no longer express opinions of dissent, then Japan cannot claim to be a democratic nation. If the masses can no longer accept choices except those of the mainstream, then the tragedy of the *Hikikomori* youths and the high suicide rates will continue. If the masses can no longer question the authorities, then the authorities may again lead the nation in the wrong direction with disastrous consequences.

In Japan, democracy in education needs to be carefully scrutinized. Without examining democracy, the Japanese people may never realize what freedom really means. When Japanese people realize the significance of democracy, they may finally understand that the minorities are also vital to a democratic society, and they may appreciate the value of different thinking and different lifestyles. When that time comes, all choices made by Japan's people, whether by the mainstream or by the minorities, will become the "Japanese way of life."

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Appendix A. Japanese Constitution Chapter III

Rights and duties of the people

Article 10.

The conditions necessary for being a Japanese national shall be determined by law.

Article 11.

The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights.

These fundamental human rights guaranteed to the people by this constitution shall be conferred upon the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolate rights.

Article 12.

The freedoms and rights guaranteed to the people by this constitution shall be maintained by the constant endeavor of the people, who shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights and shall always be responsible for utilizing them for the public welfare.

Article 13.

All of the people shall be respected as individuals. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs.

Article 14.

All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.

Peers and peerage shall not be recognized.

No privilege shall accompany any award of honor, decoration or any distinction, nor shall any such award be valid beyond the lifetime of the individual who now holds or hereafter may receive it.

Article 15.

The people have the inalienable right to choose their public officials and to dismiss them.

All public officials are servants of the whole community and not of any group thereof.

Universal adult suffrage is guaranteed with regard to the election of public officials.

In all elections, secrecy of the ballot shall not be violated. A voter shall not be answerable, publicly or privately, for the choice he has made.

Article 16.

Every person shall have the right of peaceful petition for the redress of damage, for the removal of public officials, for the enactment, repeal or amendment of laws, ordinances or regulations and for other matters; nor shall any person be in any way discriminated against for sponsoring such a petition.

Article 17.

Every person may sue for redress as provided by law from the state or a public entity, in case he has suffered damage through illegal act of any public official.

Article 18.

No person shall be held in bondage of any kind. Involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, is prohibited.

Article 19.

Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated.

Article 20.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the state, nor exercise any political authority.

No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice.

The state and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.

Article 21.

Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed.

No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated.

Article 22.

Every person shall have freedom to choose and change his residence and to choose his occupation to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare.

Freedom of all persons to move to a foreign country and to divest themselves of their nationality shall be inviolate.

Article 23.

Academic freedom is guaranteed.

Article 24.

Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis.

With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.

Article 25.

All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.

In all spheres of life, the state shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health.

Article 26.

All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law.

All people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.

Article 27.

All people shall have the right and the obligation to work.

Standards for wages, hours, rest and other working conditions shall be fixed by law.

Children shall not be exploited.

Article 28.

The right of workers to organize and to bargain and act collectively is guaranteed.

Article 29.

The right to own or to hold property is inviolable. Property rights shall be defined by law, in conformity with the public welfare.

Private property may be taken for public use upon just compensation therefore.

Article 30.

The people shall be liable to taxation as provided by law.

Article 31.

No person shall be deprived of life or liberty, nor shall any other criminal penalty be imposed, except according to procedure established by law.

Article 32.

No person shall be denied the right of access to the courts.

Article 33.

No person shall be apprehended except upon warrant issued by a competent judicial officer which specifies the offense with which the person is charged, unless he is apprehended, the offense being committed.

Article 34.

No person shall be arrested or detained without being at once informed of the charges against him or without the immediate privilege of counsel; nor shall he be detained without adequate cause; and upon demand of any person such cause must be immediately shown in open court in his presence and the presence of his counsel.

Article 35.

The right of all persons to be secure in their homes, papers and effects against entries, searches and seizures shall not be impaired except upon warrant issued for adequate cause and particularly describing the place to be searched and things to be seized, or except as provided by article 33.

Each search or seizure shall be made upon separate warrant issued by a competent judicial officer.

Article 36.

The infliction of torture by any public officer and cruel punishments are absolutely forbidden.

Article 37.

In all criminal cases the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial tribunal.

He shall be permitted full opportunity to examine all witnesses, and he shall have the right of compulsory process for obtaining witnesses on his behalf at public expense.

At all times the accused shall have the assistance of competent counsel who shall, if the accused is unable to secure the same by his own efforts, be assigned to his use by the state.

Article 38.

No person shall be compelled to testify against himself.

Confession made under compulsion, torture or threat, or after prolonged arrest or detention shall not be admitted in evidence.

No person shall be convicted or punished in cases where the only proof against him is his own confession.

Article 39.

No person shall be held criminally liable for an act which was lawful at the time it was committed, or of which he has been acquitted, nor shall he be placed in double jeopardy.

Article 40.

Any person, in case he is acquitted after he has been arrested or detained, may sue the state for redress as provided by law.

Appendix B. Selected Review of Fundamental Law on Education in Comparison

| 2006 Version | 1947 Version (Supervised by SCAP) |
|--|---|
| <p>Article 2 To realize the aforementioned aims, education shall be carried out in such a way as to achieve the following objectives, while respecting academic freedom: (V) to foster an attitude to respect our traditions and culture, love the country and region that nurtured them, together with respect for other countries and a desire to contribute to world peace and the development of the international community.</p> | <p>Article 2 The aims of education shall be realized on all occasions and in all places. In order to achieve the aims, we shall endeavour to contribute to the creation and development of culture by mutual esteem and co-operation, respecting academic freedom, having a regard for actual life and cultivating a spontaneous spirit.</p> |
| <p>Article 8 Taking into account the public nature of privately established schools and their important role in school education, the national and local governments shall endeavour to promote private school education through subsidies and other appropriate means, while respecting school autonomy.</p> | N/A |
| <p>Article 10 Mothers, fathers, and other guardians, having the primary responsibility for their children's education, shall endeavour to teach them the habits necessary for life, encourage a spirit of independence, and nurture the balanced development of their bodies and minds.</p> | N/A |
| <p>Article 13 Schools, families, local residents, and other relevant persons shall be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities regarding education, and endeavour to develop partnership and cooperation.</p> | N/A |
| <p>Article 16 Education shall not be subject to improper control and shall be carried out in accordance with this and other acts; education administration shall be carried out in a fair and proper manner through appropriate role sharing and cooperation between the national and local governments.</p> | <p>Article 10 Education shall not be subject to improper control, but it shall be directly responsible to the whole citizens. (2) Education Administration shall, on the basis of this realization, aim at the adjustment and establishment of the various conditions required for the pursuit of the aims of education.</p> |
| <p>Article 17 In order to facilitate the</p> | N/A |

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| <p>comprehensive and systematic implementation of measures for the promotion of education, the government shall formulate a basic plan covering basic principles, required measures, and other necessary items in relation to the promotion of education. It shall report this plan to the Diet and make it public.</p> | |
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Appendix C. Interview Questions for Discussion

The following questions were used as an aid to discussion with the interviewees:

- What kind of outfit did you wear when you went for a job interview?
- What kind of questions were you asked at the job interview?
- Were the job interviews as you expected?
- How did you prepare for the job interview?
- Did you have exams along with the interview when you applied to join the company?
- What made you decide what you were going to wear, how you would answer the questions, and how you would act at the job interview?
- If you were the interviewer at the job interview, what would be the most important thing in deciding who to recruit?
- What advice would you give to new university graduates in preparation for their job interviews?
- For you, what does it mean to be a member of an organization?
- What is your definition of individuality and conformity?
- Have you ever had an experience where you chose to conceal your opinion?
When and why?