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Candidate session number			
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Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2013

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Social and cultural anthropology
(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: Why was the introduction of yutori system unsuccessful? A comparative analysis on how a social structure determines the education system and students' academic life in Japan

Candidate's declaration

This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

's choice of topic flowed directly from her experience as an expatriate Japanese student studying in Germany for several years, and finding it difficult to reintegrate into a Japanese school upon her return. She then went on wonder why a general approach to education instituted in recent years in Japan (the *yutori* system), which she recognized as having features in common with the system she had been used to in Germany, failed in Japan while succeeding in Germany. This led her to examine the structural factors in each nation which might be responsible for making the educational approach work—or fail-- for the society.

reports wishing she had carried out interviews, but she was unable to travel either to Japan or Germany during her period of research. Finding relevant resources was also a problem for her, and it was late in her research that she encountered a comparative case in the anthropological literature which threw light on the major structural features which figure in her analysis.

The high point in her learning experience according to was her finding that Japanese parents seem to be significantly less satisfied with their jobs than German parents (which influences their occupational preferences for their children), and that on broad measures of academic achievement, Asian students are not as successful as they are generally thought to be.

All in all, never flagged in moving forward with her research, frequently came to me with questions during the research and writing process, and conscientiously met all deadlines.

This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

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Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1		Examiner 2		Examiner 3	
	Score	maximum	Score	maximum	Score	maximum
A research question	2	2		2		
B introduction	2	2		2		
C investigation	2	4		4		
D knowledge and understanding	2	4		4		
E reasoned argument	2	4		4		
F analysis and evaluation	2	4		4		
G use of subject language	1	4		4		
H conclusion	1	2		2		
I formal presentation	3	4		4		
J abstract	2	2		2		
K holistic judgment	2	4		4		
Total out of 36	21					

Why was the introduction of yutori system unsuccessful?

**A comparative analysis on how a social structure determines the education
system and students' academic life in Japan**

Name:

IB Candidate and student number:

Date: January 27, 2013

Word count: 3716

Abstract

This paper will investigate why the introduction of yutori system turned out to be unsuccessful in Japan. Yutori education system or “stress-free” education, in other words, was introduced by the Japanese Government for the purpose of ameliorating the negative aspects of Japanese education, back in the 1990’s. However, the introduction of yutori education system turned out to be unsuccessful. This paper will approach the attempt of the introducing the yutori system by looking at it from a social structural point of view. This research is conducted primarily through analyzing ethnographic data and journal articles. Observation made by the writer of this paper is also included. First, the history of the education system of Japan and its relation to the current system is being stated, along with the description of the examination system. The craftsman industry is used as an example to explain that academic achievement is regarded with high importance in Japan. This is followed by the consequences of the yutori system and the social structure of Japan, connecting it further to how it relates to the education system and exam system. To make a contrast to Japan, the social structure and education system of Germany is considered. Regarding the difference in education system, the reason why a school with a totally different style could adapt to the German society is considered.

The reason why the yutori system was not successful is because of its characteristics. The yutori system was not congruent with the present social structure of Japan in which academic achievement was regarded with high importance.

Table of contents

• Abstract	p.2
• Table of contents	p.3
• Introduction	p.4
• Background	
• The history of Japanese school system	p.5
• The yutori education system	p.5
• Data presentation	
• Social structure and value system in Japan- academic achievement based society-	p.7
• School and exam system of Japan	p.8
• Social structure in Germany –the Meister system-	p.10
• School and exam system of Germany	p.11
• A different education style - the Waldorf education system in Germany-	p.12
• How Waldorf School students adapt to the Abitur system	p.13
• Analysis	p.14
• Conclusion	p.16
• Bibliography	p.18

Introduction

In the contemporary period, education could be regarded as a tool through which the structure of the nation is reflected. (Kelley, 1977) Kelley also mentions that “anthropological research in education must move beyond an idealist strategy and adopt a structural approach which analyzes the content and the structure of social relations.” (Kelley, 1977, p.210-220) The education system to the social structure could be seen in a similar way classroom behavior, interaction, or behavior is to the sociocultural environment of the school. Kelley conducted a field research of schools in two different ecological zones in Chiapas, Mexico, examining how educational policy is shaped by the national and political structure. He concludes that the national educational system of Mexico has failed to introduce major sociocultural change in the Altos region because the change was not congruent with Indian allocation of time and resources. This paper will look at the yutori system, an education style that was introduced to Japan in 1993, and analyze the cause why it was unsuccessful, by looking at whether the newly introduced yutori system was congruent with the Japanese society.

The intention of the yutori system was to alleviate academic and exam related stress along with social problems as a result of the stress. Such include suicide and bullying. However, the yutori system did not serve to reduce intensity, but on the other hand, intensified the academic disparity of students. This paper attempts to approach the reason why the yutori system couldn't be integrated into the Japanese society successfully, by investigating Japanese education system in relation to its social structure. Social structure includes value system of the society that determines what is regarded with high significance, analogous to what Kelley

expresses as time allocation and resources to the people he studied.

Furthermore, the education system of Japan is compared to that of Germany, which has a different social structure and value system. The German social structure is able to accept different education systems.

The history of Japanese school system

In the Meiji era, in the 19th century, Japan released the restriction on trading countries, which resulted in the influx of foreign cultures. Due to this, the Japanese government ranked the university as the highest students could reach, and opened up the opportunity for all students regardless of social status. After the Second World War, Japan adopted the American school system consisting of six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, three years of high school, and the university. The elementary school and junior high school are compulsory education. (Wada, 2011)

The yutori education system

Japan introduced the yutori education system, a “stress-free” education system to overcome the negative aspects of its education system since post war. The primary reason for the reform in education system was due to the large amount of materials being covered, academic related stress (Ang, 2006), and resulting social problems. (Okada, 1999) In fact, “yutori” means “room to breathe” in Japanese. (Shibuya, 2008) The Government of Japan noticed, back in the day, that the education system of Japan was oriented more on the academic aspect, but not as much on the originality of individuals. The reason why originality was highlighted

could be because of globalization, and the influx of various teaching methods around the world.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Science and Technology (MEXT) deduced that a reform in the current system that focuses on social studies or sciences were necessary. The reform in system included reducing the materials in text books to 75 percent of the original, and introducing periods of “integrated study.” The aim of the “integrated studies” was to raise the capability of students to identify an issue and analyze it, differing from social studies or sciences. The school days were reduced from 6 days to 5 days with the hope that the free time will be used by students to explore academic fields of their interest.

However, contrary to the results that were expected by the Ministry, there were several things pointed out that criticizes the negative aspects of the yutori system. One of them was the significant decline in the PISA scores, lowering the ranking of Japan each time the test was taken. (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2006). PISA stands for Programme for International Student Assessment. The ultimate purpose of the yutori education was to create an environment in which students are released from daily stress. Many students, however, spent their spare time attending special preparation schools, called juku, in preparation for exams, depending on whether or not their family could afford the expense. This creates the following problem. Depending on the finance situation of the family, some students inevitably don't attend special preparation schools. The consequence is that yutori education resulted in the polarization of exam scores of students depending on the wealth of the household they grew up in. Contradictory to the purpose of public education to provide equal education opportunity, the yutori system made a “good” education accessible to children of families with higher income than families with lower income. The social class or

status of the parents becomes a matter of great importance when it comes to the quality of education one can receive. Although the primary aim of public education was to provide equal learning opportunity, the concept of equality of opportunity, however, “shifted from the egalitarian concept to the meritocratic concept in Japan over the period.” (Okada, 1999)

Social structure and value system in Japan- academic achievement based society -

In this section, the importance of academic achievement as a value system is being examined. The academic based social system will be investigated as an institution that exerts power upon the education system and students who follow it.

The fact that Japanese people place high importance on academic achievement plays a significant role in the society. It is because the difference in education level influences the authority, income, and social status of the individuals. This paper will specifically focus on two aspects; the framework of the society in which the choices of future occupation is determined by academic achievement and the extent academic achievement is considered important by people.

It is especially hard for workers in Japan to make a living through crafts industry. The reason why this occupation was chosen as an example is because it particularly reflects the social structure. Crafts industry, or small and medium-sized enterprises that involves manual production are known to be unstable in Japan. Many of the small and medium-sized enterprises depend on the income of their own, and there is no institutionalized framework for protection. According to a survey conducted in 1986 by Izumi, 90 percent of the crafts workers

in Japan answered that they would not choose the same career if they have had the choice, and neither would they encourage their children to pursue the same occupation. This is due to the poor fundamental support system for small-medium enterprises. (Izumi, 1983) For this reason, academic achievement is considered to factor into future success significantly, which makes academic success a goal for everyone in the society. This social framework, that there is little support in craft industry, causes people to aim for higher academic achievement so they have the choice to obtain a career that ensures a stable income and future life.

Not only the type of work one could obtain, but also the probability of obtaining a work is affected by the difference in academic background. The Cabinet Office of Japan reported the amount of time required for people to obtain a job after the Tohoku earthquake. According to the survey, 60 percent of those who attended university were able to obtain one within two months whereas only 40 percent of those who haven't had university education were able to find reemployment within the same time period. (Cabinet office, 2011) Academic background could be, therefore, understood as a measurement in the Japanese society. This system that values academic back ground constitutes the social system.

School and exam system of Japan

As a result of the social structure, the current education system has adopted features unique to Japan. In addition to the regular schools, students attend special preparation schools. As mentioned previously, six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school which are compulsory education, and three years of high school constitute the Japanese education system before university. After completing junior high school,

the majority of students attend high school by taking an entrance exam. All universities in Japan require entrance examination with only few exceptions.

Most of the public high schools along with private schools require students to take the entrance exam. Admission to rigorous universities becomes highly competitive, since a good education ensures employment, thus a reasonable future. For this reason, there is a pressure upon students to receive good secondary education, in order to be fully prepared for the entrance exam. In urban cities, in particular, private schools are among the popular. The popularity accelerated more since the introduction of yutori system. Many students and their families aim for competitive “unified lower to upper secondary school.” These types of schools combine junior high school and high school to teach materials in their own curriculum that is effective in preparing for the entrance exam. Competitive ones are known for a high entrance exam pass rate to prominent universities.

It is not only the regular schools, but also special preparation schools outside of the regular schools students attend regularly that play a vital role. Those schools are known as “juku.” Students attend those institutions after their regular school or during holidays. Those private institutions, in fact, functioned in aggravating parents’ anxiety of their child’s future when the yutori system was introduced, causing parents to send their child to special preparation school. They trumpeted the watering down of the national curriculum, stating that more time has been allotted to integrated studies than into social studies or sciences. (Bjork, 2005)

As a consequence, “Such rhetoric, though rarely backed with strong empirical evidence, has fueled the anxieties of parents concerned about their children's academic prospects.” (Bjork, 2005) Since the 1990s, over 40% of the six-graders of elementary school and the majority of junior high school students have attended

juku. (Bjork, 2005)

From the pattern, it could be deduced that the social system in which academic achievement is regarded with high importance is framing the emphasis on education in schools and parents. The social structure of Japan that puts emphasis on high academic background causes education to be absolutely necessary, intensifying competition.

Social structure in Germany –the Meister system-

In this section, the case in Germany is being considered to provide contrast to the social system of Japan. Germany has a social system that is not as highly academic based as in Japan.

Compared to the Japanese system, Germany has a social system in which manual industry, or artistic occupation is regulated under the crafts and trades regulation code; “Gesetz zur Ordnung des Handwerks : Handwerksordnung.” In a survey conducted in Germany, 90 percent of the manual industry workers answered that they would choose manual industry again if they have the choice, and that they would recommend their children to pursue their occupation. (Izumi, 1983) In the modern days in Germany, there has been a downturn in manual industry, being replaced by more academic-based social system. However, compared to the social system of Japan, where there are no regulation codes to support the crafts industry, it could be concluded that manual craftsmen in Germany have better social appraisal, for regulations such as the crafts and trades regulation code are built into the social framework.

School and exam system of Germany

Germany, therefore, has an education system in which students are able to choose their future in various different ways in accordance with their special skills or interest, maintaining prestige as do the students who pursue academics. This characteristic, that there are many ways to advance, is reflected in the school system.

Germany has an education system that is described by Kido as “multi lineal” meaning that all students regardless of academic level study together for only the first four years at a “Grundschule”, the first four years of primary school, and will be divided into different levels after the fourth year into either “Hauptschule”, “Realschule”, or “Gymnasium.” “Hauptschule” consists of 5 years, and students usually obtain a job after graduation. At “Realschule”, students are intended to become intermediate technician. Students who intend to proceed to university study at “Gymnasium.”

In Germany, the high school diploma, Abitur, is given to students who passed the Abitur exam. Whether or not one is qualified to attend a university is determined by the combination of the Abitur exam performance and grades at his or her previous school. Out of the 900 full points of the combination of Abitur performance and school grades, Abitur accounts for 300 points and school grades account for 600 points. The exam consists of four written exams and one oral exam, which is demonstrating the ability to hold a presentation and exert opinion about the topic. The Abitur exam is conducted in each German state, separately from each other. Once students pass the Abitur exam and receive a qualification to attend a university, they are eligible of entering any university in Germany at any time of their choice. The role of the Abitur exam is not to have students compete with each other in accordance with their test scores, but rather to test if the student has the

minimal competency to study at a university. (Kido, 2008)

A different education style - the Waldorf education system in Germany-

The Waldorf School operates on a curriculum totally different from the public schools of Germany. The fact that it maintains in the German society proves that the education system of it is congruent with the social structure.

The Waldorf School in Germany was first founded in 1919 in Stuttgart by an Australian educator, Rudolf Steiner. The teachers of Waldorf Schools are trained based on the principles of anthroposophy, a formal educational, therapeutic, and creative system established by Rudolf Steiner, seeking to use mainly natural means to optimize physical and mental health and well-being. (Oxford Dictionaries) Waldorf Schools focuses on the spiritual growth during the early stages of childhood. The concept that the focus should not be centered on intellectual growth is held. Instead, the thinking should be progressed through visual and pictorial learning. (Van, 2006)

Here are some of the features that are unique to a Waldorf School I observed as an elementary Waldorf student in Germany, Augsburg. The daily routine starts with reciting a verse of Steiner, the founder of the school, followed by individuals reciting their own verse given by the teacher in accordance with their day of birth. The first two-hour-class is taught by the homeroom teacher. During the first few years of elementary school stage, concepts are introduced through stories and images. Most classes are held without using text books, but with course summary notes made by each individual student during classes. Students are not

graded according to their academic performance, but their personal absolute values and features observed by their homeroom teacher. Students are taught by the same teacher throughout the first eight years. Academic performance is irrelevant in the elementary school year, because spiritual, internal growth of the students have greater emphasis. The first class of the day is taught by the home room teacher, based on a block system, meaning that the same subject is being taught throughout several consecutive weeks.

As seen above, there is little orientation on developing reading or writing skills in the early grades. In addition, students at Waldorf Schools do not have standardized tests until they reach a few years before obtaining an Abitur diploma, a designation of secondary education in Germany. This system is different from the public system of Germany where students are divided into three different types of schools after they complete their fourth year of “Grundschule”, primary school. However, the Waldorf School curriculum has been successful adapting to the Abitur.

How Waldorf School students adapt to the Abitur system

Students of Waldorf Schools are successful in passing the Abitur exam, despite the unique curriculum without heavy orientation on academics. This education system of the Waldorf School that places weight on spiritual growth rather than on academics in the early grades, is to some extent similar to what yutori system has been aiming for.

By looking at the Abitur exam style, it could be seen how the criteria could be met from the Waldorf education’s standpoint, because of the flexibility in a social structure that does not put heavy emphasis on the

academic achievement of the individual. The Abitur exam itself does orient on examining the students' competency rather than using the scores to compare one student with another.

The Abitur system in Germany would allow schools to focus on areas that require critical thinking as a preparation for the Abitur exam instead of short term knowledge or specialized skills to pass the exams, including rote learning. Also, because every student's admission to a university is ensured through the system in which one will be accepted as long he or she earns an Abitur diploma, there is less severity in competition.

Analysis

So far, the education system of Japan and Germany has been examined in relation to each country's social system, focusing on what is considered significant in the society. Regarding the change to the yutori system that was introduced by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), it could be assumed that the context of the Japanese society was not investigated closely enough to predict negative consequences of the yutori system. It is considered important that in order to make a change in a society, the change needs to be introduced regarding the social context and value system of the society. Kelley (1977) has conducted a field research of schools in two different ecological zones in Chiapas, Mexico; the Soconusco region and the Altos region. Kelley concluded that the national educational system of Mexico has failed to introduce major sociocultural change in the Altos region because it was not congruent with Indian allocation of time and resources. This is closely linked to the past history of Mexico. The arrival of the Spanish, "the Ladinos", caused radical change in the economic and ecological bases in the Soconusco region.

However, the Altos region did not undergo a change that was as radical as in the Soconusco region. Due to this fact in the past, the attempt of the national education department to “Mexicanize the Indian, utilizing Spanish as a medium of instruction” did not function within the Altos region. (Kelley, 1977, p.219) This is because the Indians living in the Altos region allocate their time and resources to the household and village mixed subsistence economy. In this manner, the focus on education in the Altos region will change accordingly. Introducing the national education system means that a fundamental transformation of the modes of production should take place within the Altos region. The case of yutori system in the Japanese society could also be interpreted in a similar manner. The yutori system was intended to reduce academic related stress among students. However, this purpose of the yutori education system was not congruent with the social system in which academic background was considered crucial. In comparison to Japan, it could be seen in Germany that there are more variety in careers which individuals could choose regarding their interest and strengths. The social structure in Germany does not create restrictions or clear advantage on certain occupation, thus allowing students to pursue any occupation of their interest. In the Japanese society, on the other hand, many areas of interest are dominated by the structure where academic background is regarded as highly important. This makes individuals put much effort into academics. This is also supported by Sue and Okazaki; “Academic achievement is extremely important because it is perceived as one of the few avenues for upward mobility and expanded options” (Sue, Okazaki, 1990, 913-920)

A major challenge the Japanese Ministry (MEXT) will face is how to balance “reducing stress and preventing academic disparity among students” with the social structure. In introducing a change, the

underlying social structure needs to be carefully considered in order prevent further problems.

Conclusion

The research question asked why the introduction of the yutori system couldn't satisfy the Ministry's aim of alleviating academics-related stress among students. It could be said that it is because the yutori system was not congruent with the actual social structure of the Japanese society that is intense in academic competition. In Japan, the fact that academic competency is valued affects individuals and increase the intensity of entrance exams. In Germany, on the other hand, there is a legal support system for the craftsman industry. For different kinds of occupation are recognized under law, competition is reduced, and university entrance systems are less severe in competition. In introducing the yutori system, the consequences such as the disparity between households and slim change in stress among students due to the social structure, could have been unforeseen to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). In order to serve the primary goals of the Ministry, not only schools centered reforms, but also research and reforms of the profound social structure using anthropological concepts should be crucial, since the education system depends significantly on the social structural foundation. In this way, the Ministry would have a better insight of the society and could implement effective ways to reduce intensity and stress among students.

The method of this research was primarily oriented on analyzing sources. The research was also limited by time and the amount of data obtained. Due to those factors, this paper was not able to investigate closely the reason for the difference in people's perspective and values in Japan and in Germany. Conducting

ethnographic studies without the time limit, interviewing students, parents, and teachers would have provided a profounder and more current insight of the national trait and the social structure. Considering those data, the issue of yutori system could have been investigated not only from a social structural point of view, but also from a cosmological perspective, the perspective of people.

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