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A critical analysis of educational debate in Japan 1982-1987

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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL DEBATE IN JAPAN 1982-1987

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Hiroko Tabuchi

August, 1996

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ABSTRACT

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL DEBATE IN JAPAN 1982-1987

By Hiroko Tabuchi

This thesis examines the debate about educational reform in Japan between 1982 and 1987. An in-depth analysis of the debaters' social statuses and their respective reform proposals revealed their true target audiences. Media and public reaction dramatized the depth of the power struggle among all involved.

Rhetorical contextualization was employed as a research method to compare the debaters' social statuses, their opinions, and their reasons for joining in. Two analyses were done: of the debate about six major issues and of the selection of the education council members.

The study discovered that many reformers contributed to the debate in order to attract attention, and not to redefine the purpose and goal of education as had been previously assumed. The study suggests that had Paulo Freire's emancipation pedagogy been used to educate critical thinkers, more success might have been obtained toward the solution of the problems of the Japanese education system.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN JAPAN AND RELEVANT LITERATURE

Since the 1983 general election campaign, educational reform has become a major topic in Japan. At that time Yasuhiro Nakasone of the Liberal Democratic Party introduced educational reform as one of his political priorities. His main reform plan was specifically aimed at creating a more relaxed environment and less pressure for students.

In the Japanese school system, 6 years of primary school and 3 years of junior high school education were compulsory. If junior high school students wanted to attend high school—and more than 90% of them did—they had to take an entrance examination offered at every high school in Japan. In order to receive college education, high school students were required to take another entrance examination. High schools and colleges were ranked on the overall percentage of their graduates who succeeded in the entrance examinations and in achieving high level positions in the professional world. The more highly ranked the high school a student entered, the more prestigious the college s/he was likely to attend. The more prestigious the college a student attended, the better job and the higher social status s/he might obtain. For this reason, passing entrance examinations became the sole

purpose for higher education. The pressure on students to succeed in these exams was even worse than in the previous decade. That was the reason Nakasone was motivated to prepare a reform plan, aiming at offering students an education which would cultivate more creative minds and healthier attitudes.

In the early stages, Nakasone's unprecedented emphasis on educational reform was favored by the mass media, by educational critics, and by the general public. However, the issues Nakasone proposed went in a surprising direction (Hayano, 1993). There were mainly three camps behind the debate, including Nakasone, the Ministry of Education, and the Education Interest Faction, and because of the power struggle among the three, educational reform was transformed into battles about who should make the changes and who could benefit from the reform. Nakasone left the prime minister's office in 1988, and all plans were supposed to have been completed by the end of 1994. The new systems were introduced step-by-step. But to this day the public, especially teachers and parents, is confused and dissatisfied. The core problem remains the same--high pressure to succeed on the entrance exam.

This thesis explores the debate among the three camps about educational reform in Japan in the 1980s, and exposes aspects of the system which were excluded in the debate.

A Brief Historical Background of Modern Education in Japan

The contemporary education system in Japan was structured in the late 1800s (Meiji Era) in accordance with the change of political structure. When the Tokugawa shogunate ended, the Tokugawa administration gave up its political power to the Emperor. The new imperial court was established and it rebuilt Japanese political and economic structures. Since Japan had closed its ports to most countries except China and Holland for more than 200 years, the general public had had very limited contact with outside cultures. Although major books published in the Western countries were translated into Japanese and people in the upper social class had been reading them, the majority of the people (especially commoners) remained ignorant of the outside world.

When the Tokugawa era¹ ended, many new things, including democracy, were introduced into Japan. People were shocked that everything in Japan was behind the Western nations. The government needed to start reforming

¹ In the Tokugawa era, there were 4 ranks in a caste system: Shi (warrior), Noh (farmer), Koh (craftsman), Shoh (merchant). Bushi (warrior), as the top rank, was required to study at a school named Hangakko (Domain School) or hire private tutors. Also if Shoh (merchant) and Koh (craftsman) could afford to go to school named Terakoya (Temple School), they did. Especially Shonin could, because they were rich. But most of Nohmin (farmers) could not afford this. Despite their status (ranked second in the caste system), economically speaking, the farmers stayed at the bottom. In the Tokugawa era, the administration established this caste system to maintain social order. It gave the second highest status to farmers so that they could be satisfied in their position in the society even though their living standard was very low.

the minds of people. Literacy in Japan was highly regarded at that time, although the majority was illiterate. One of the urgent tasks for the government was to raise the living standard of those illiterates so that all people could participate in national development.

In 1868, when the Restoration came, the old schools were changed into the new style. Public school education was promoted by the new government. Because the four-rank caste system was abolished, democracy and equality were the hope for the general public. People came to believe that if one worked hard, one could succeed in life. The government used the word "success in life" to promote education. The government established schools all over Japan to promote public education. The number of schools was not enough for all people; however, the new system eliminated the old social caste classes and school was opened to everybody. It was an innovative policy compared with that of the previous era. The government abolished any old systems that would hinder the construction of a new and more egalitarian society.² Although not all people could afford to send their children to school because of financial difficulty,³ it was a big step toward democracy.

At that time, education was a tool to emancipate people from the old caste system. According to Japanese Education History (1990), and Education

² Aristocracy and plutocracy remained until the end of World War II.

³ Specifically, peasants had difficulty in sending their children to school.

Reference (1978), the percentage of school students per children's population in 1902 was 90%. Among those, 68% actually attended school. As mentioned above, there were still many people who could not afford to go to school. The percentage of school children who completed the curriculum might be much lower, although this made it possible for the people in the lower classes to gain qualification to move up in social status.

The Inception of Compulsory Education

All citizens are subject to have their children receive a normal education (Japanese Constitution, Condition 26, Item 2).

All citizens have a duty to have their children receive 9 years of a normal education (Educational Fundamental Law).⁴

Four factors are important for an understanding of Japanese compulsory education: (1) parental or guardian's responsibility; (2) establishment of institutions; (3) funding; and (4) elimination of disturbance. Parental or guardian's responsibility dictates that all parents or guardians have a legal obligation to send their children to school. A parent or guardian must release his/her child(ren) from home to school. The second factor, establishment of institutions, is for the nation or the local school boards. For parents or guardians to release their children to school, the nation or the local school boards must guarantee educational institutions for all children. Originally,

⁴ The Japanese Constitution was revised and the Education Fundamental Law was established after World War II. Enactment of the Education Fundamental Laws started in 1947 (Hosotani, Okuda, & Kohno, 1978, p.44).

compulsory education was aimed at offering an opportunity to learn for all people, especially the powerless of the society. Therefore, the nation or the local school boards must provide education equally to all children. This leads to the third factor, funding.

The nation or the local school boards must guarantee compulsory education at no cost on the part of parents or guardians. If education expenses are too costly, it would pose an obstacle, especially for those who are poor. Therefore, the nation or the local school boards must guarantee free compulsory education. The fourth factor is elimination of obstacles. This is directed at industry. Children under 15 may not be hired, because it would interfere with their education. During the Industrial Revolution (in the early 1900s), many children had to go to work to support their families. They could not complete their education. The nation must protect children from that obstacle (Okuda & Kohno, 1993, p.131). All citizens have a right to receive education from the nation and the nation must guarantee the right. The word "compulsory" applies to all people in the nation; they must cooperate to protect the right of freedom of learning.

The first compulsory education regulation was set in 1886. It was four years of primary education (Hosotani, Okuda, & Kohno, 1978, p.44). The purpose of education at that time was to raise the consciousness of Japanese individuals.

Thereby, all people could participate in reconstructing and modernizing the nation. In other words, education was promoted to liberate people from the old social rule, so that people could have the competence to participate in national development. Japan could dissolve the old consciousness of being a closed country for 200 years and catch up with the advanced Western nations. In 1900, the government guaranteed freedom from educational fees for compulsory education for all citizens. In 1907, the length of compulsory education was extended to six years (Hosotani, Okuda, & Kohno, 1978, p.44; Ikezaki & Matsushima, 1990, p.80). In 1941, the government decided to extend compulsory education to nine years; however, this was turned down because of the war. In 1946, after World War II, compulsory education was extended from six years to nine years. It consisted of six years of primary education and three years of lower middle education, and was enacted in 1947. Since then, a single track of 6-3-3-4⁵ school system has been continued up to the present.

When the cabinet was established in 1885, the first Minister of Education, Mori, promoted a nationalistic educational philosophy. According to Mori, primary education should offer moral education and the basic knowledge

⁵ Six years of primary school, three years of junior high school, three years of high school education, and four years of college level were framed. Although college education was not compulsory, it was included into 6-3-3-4 single track school system. College education was set for a 4 year curriculum. Students usually completed college curricula in 4 years.

Japanese citizens should acquire. Although success in life was still possible, Mori refocused the purpose of education away from individual success to national spirit (Hosotani, Okuda, & Kohno, 1978, p.44; Ikezaki & Matsushima, 1990, p. 36). Nationalistic education was intensified before World War II. Education was used to enhance the power of the Emperor.

Contemporary Compulsory Education

After World War II, school administration was entrusted to the Education Ministry. Since then, standardization of the school system, e.g., establishment of a unified general curriculum, and the new school year starting in April (rather than in September), was installed in Japan. The standardized system was on the surface quite rational because compulsory education had to guarantee an equal opportunity for every citizen. It naturally had to guarantee the same level of instruction, the same facility, curriculum. The Japanese government and people reacted sensitively to inequality.

To keep a similar level of instruction, teachers were encouraged to transfer schools every several years (Fallows, 1991). The school board dispensed the same budget level to all schools. When a school wanted to do something new, it had a hard time to convince the school board, because the school board simply said, "there was no previous example." The Ministry of Education issued

"Instruction Guidelines"⁶ to all primary and junior high schools to keep the same instruction level.

In the early 1960s, the number of students going to high school rapidly increased (Ikezaki & Matsushima, 1990, p.186-192). High schools, therefore, were forced to select students who were more suitable to meet their established standard. Consequently, an examination system was established in response to the increasing inability to accommodate students who wanted to go to high school. Competitiveness in entrance examinations increased every year. The government and the local school boards tried to set up more schools so that all people who wanted to go to high school could enter. In 1963, the Ministry of Education changed the school education enforcement regulation and dictated that all high schools were to offer an entrance examination no matter whether applicants surpassed the regular number or not.

In the 1980s, the percentage of school students who went on to high school reached 94%. This was made possible because the government established a large number of high schools. However, related to the competitive spirit of the entrance examination system was the establishment of a new caste system via rankings among high schools. Since the living standards of the general public rose dramatically from 1960 to 1980, and the majority believed that they

⁶ Though schools could exercise their judgment in following this centralized document, most public schools followed it without criticism.

were in the middle class, they could afford and wanted to send their children to higher education. Parents naturally wanted their children to go to better schools. The competitiveness in entering prestigious schools was extraordinarily high. Junior high school as a result became the starting place to prepare for the examination.

Before World War II, competition for the entrance examination for the small number of junior high schools was a major issue in Japan. In the 15 years after the war, the high school entrance examination became a major issue. When the war ended, the new government restructured the educational system. But in people's minds, not much was changed, except for the fact that people were released from nationalistic fascistic oppression. The belief in success in life through education was not lost, and people's expectation of progress and advancement in life through education grew.

The Necessity of this Study in the Communication Field

Three reasons led me to study educational reform in Japan: 1) my own personal experience in the harsh and fragmented education system; 2) US American people's lack of understanding of the Japanese educational system; and 3) a critical understanding of Japanese education by examining the need for reform which shifted from juvenile delinquency problems to a political power struggle in the Diet.

Personal Experience

Like many teenagers in Japan, I experienced the so-called "exam-hell" (受験地獄) or "exam-war" (受験戦争)—education only for high school and college entrance examinations. This experience was very negative for me, and I would like to see a change in the Japanese education system. Since the first year of junior high school (at 13 years of age), my parents and teachers often stressed the importance of the entrance examination for high school which I was to take at age fifteen. Thinking about the examination made me very apprehensive because my parents often warned me, "Study, or you won't have any place to go." If I had failed all my entrance exams, I would not have been able to attend any high school, and getting a job at the age of 15 meant I would never be able to reach a higher social status.

In class, most of the materials were taught in order to maximize success in the entrance exam. My fellow students and I studied for exams rather than for comprehension or creativity. In Japan, a student had the opportunity to take one public high school exam and several private school exams. Each private school offered its own. If a student chose a specific public high school and failed, s/he could only test for private schools. Scholastic ranking based solely on grades in junior high school was very important because it determined

which level of a high school where s/he could take the one-time public school entrance examination.

Japanese junior high and senior high school students attended cram school at night after the regular school hours and on weekends. These cram schools were specifically designed to teach students strategies for passing the examinations. These cram schools became popular in the early 1980s because people felt that regular schools did not adequately prepare students for the exams. I was sent to cram school, and every few months I took practice exams which gave me an indication of the rank of high school I would be able to enter based on my test scores.

Before the exam, students went through further intensive drills in cram school to finish up materials for the exam. In the winter of 1983, I was expected to take the exam for high school. For four months, I stayed at a cram school until midnight for two or three nights a week. I used to return home around one or two o'clock in the morning, and sometimes I even skipped classes at my junior high school and went to cram school instead. Mine was not a unique case; most of my classmates kept the same schedule as I did. Teachers in a regular school understood that we could not disengage ourselves from intense drills for the real exam until the very last minute. They did not give us any penalty for skipping classes.

What was more important was the fact that many parents thought if their children were doing well in school, their children were "good." If their grades were low, they were "bad." Grades, good or bad, had the power to frame a student's identity.⁷

Intercultural Understanding

The second reason I chose this project was that in the United States there was little research about the Japanese education system. The few essays that focused on exams in Japanese education did not cover the kind of communication and curricula used in school.⁸ For example, an article appearing in The Economist on April 21, 1990 (p. 21) discusses the emphasis on exams in the Japanese educational system by providing examples of test materials offered at one of the prestigious universities. The article raised the question about how Japanese students could possibly memorize the excessive amount of material. But it did not ask why it was necessary for them to do so.

My thesis will serve as a good introduction of the Japanese students' dilemma to American audiences. It may also serve as a contrast to the American education system, especially since the American public worries

⁷ Protests against the tyranny of grades often proved detrimental to the family. For example, a crime was committed by a student who failed his exam for Tokyo University. He killed his parents because he could not put up with their negative attitudes toward him.

⁸ See Hart, J. (1990, May 28); Eisenstodt, G. (1994, January 31); Fallows, J. (1991); Louise de Rosario (1992, March 12).

about the students' mathematics and science achievement. Perhaps people in the American education field may learn from mistakes in a different education system.

Liberal Democrats' Lack of Understanding of Purpose of Education

The third reason I chose this study was to advance a critical perspective to examine the evolution of educational reform. In the educational debate in the 1980s, there was a shift in focus from juvenile delinquency and other educational issues to a power struggle among three major interest groups. In their discussions, it was unclear as to whose definition of education was honored and whose was suppressed. As mentioned earlier, during the discussion in Japan's Diet,⁹ the initial purpose of the reform—to offer students a more relaxed educational experience—was forgotten. This had to do with the problem that the purpose of reform was not clearly defined. To note, even Nakasone, the Prime Minister himself, was not sure where to begin (Hayano, 1993). The government was vaguely discussing a new style of instruction which potentially would educate students how to think. They did not have specific discussions centering on informed understanding of pedagogy.

⁹ The law-making assembly in Japan. This is equivalent to the US Congress or the British Parliament. Its members consist of 512 politicians of the House of Representatives and 252 of the House of Councilors. The Ordinary Diet Session is held once a year for 150 days. On special occasions, they can hold the "Special Diet" session.

Since the late 1800s, educational issues have been a primary topic of interest in Japan. The reasons the debate during the 1980s education reform is chosen are three fold: (1) I myself went through the preparation of high school and college entrance examination in this time frame; (2) the reform plan made at this time actually began to be implemented in the late 1980s up to the present; and (3) there is still a need to improve the Japanese system. This thesis may be potentially useful for reform in Japan.

Two theories are used here to analyze the problem of the Japanese educational system: Paulo Freire's emancipation pedagogy and Philip Wander's rhetorical contextualization, that is, a process of questioning in critical studies. Let me elaborate on them further.

Rhetorical Contextualization as the Theoretical Framework

The Meanings of Rhetoric

Commonly, we may find three meanings of rhetoric. First, the most common image of rhetoric is speech that is considered pretentious and manipulative. That is the reason most people who are untrained in the study of rhetoric may have an image of rhetoric as bombast as in contrast to sincere talk. Political or business speakers often exaggerate or overstate their cases. They say things but they do not necessarily mean them. Audiences listen to them; however, they do not believe the speaker because they think the

speaker does not really say things from his/her heart. They believe it is "rhetoric." The words and the actions do not converge. For those who have an image of rhetoric as bombast, rhetoric is something untrue, untrustworthy, and negative.

The second meaning of rhetoric is one-to-many communication, in contrast to dialectic, one-to-one communication. One-to-many communication includes public speech, magazines, TV programs, newspapers. One-to-one (dialectical) communication includes face-to-face conversation, letters, and telephone conversations. One-to-one communication is more comfortable for most people. There are a few reasons. First, one learns dialectical communication while growing up, talking to family members, friends, teachers, and neighbors. Second, one knows the person with whom s/he is talking. S/he may be able to guess what the person expects him/her to say, what s/he likes to hear, and what s/he does not want to hear. Moreover, this type of communication often occurs in an informal situation. It is more flexible. This makes it easier to correct some miscommunication.

For most lay persons who are used to dialectical communication, one-to-many communication is more difficult because they are not accustomed to it. For example, audiences may have diverse interests. Audiences' characteristics, social statuses, and purposes of participating in the communication may differ.

Also, audiences may have different vested interests regarding an issue. One may think a policy is good, but the other may think it is bad. They think differently because their backgrounds and vested interests differ. A speaker must make significant choices. The person who makes a speech has to prepare what to talk or not to talk about based upon his/her audiences. S/he has to consider what argument best moves his/her audiences. There is a way to create better communication of one-to-many. The person who makes a speech can predict who his/her audiences are, who his/her audiences are not, what they want to hear, and what they don't want to hear. Considering the audiences' interests, one can avoid what s/he and his/her audiences do not want to discuss. In this sense, rhetoric includes two factors: a speaker and an audience.

The third meaning of rhetoric includes three aspects: a sender of a message, a message, and a receiver of the message. This meaning of rhetoric encompasses all aspects of human communication including the two meanings of rhetoric discussed above. It may mean bombast or sincere talk. It also can be one-to-many communication, or one-to-one communication. However, it must involve a speaker, a message, and an audience. It must include characteristics of these three. In this case, when we study rhetoric, we have to look not only at a message, but also at its speaker and audiences. In this

thesis, I choose to use the third meaning of rhetoric. I analyze the debate by looking at the speakers, their messages, and their designated audiences. Now let me proceed to introduce a central theoretical notion for this thesis, rhetorical contextualization.

Rhetorical Contextualization

Rhetoric is used with a primary purpose--to persuade, to convince, or to make a difference. One uses rhetoric with an intention to move some people. Therefore, s/he makes a choice regarding what argument to use. However, communication exists in silence as well as in words. Messages that are unspoken or excluded also are relevant to our understanding of the words spoken. "To understand a rhetorical event, however, we don't just try to locate the speaker, the message, and the audiences. We have to contextualize it by juxtaposing what is present with what is missing" (Wander, 1996). A missing or excluded aspect of rhetorical event is called, by Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1991, cited in Wander, 1996), "the void." To rhetorically contextualize is to examine critically not only the normative elements--speakers, messages, audiences--but also their multiple voids, i.e., speaker-void, message-void, and audience-void. Let me use this thesis as an example.

In this thesis, the speaker/writer is I. Let me tell you about myself. I am a highly educated, straight, female, graduate student at a large American

university in the Bay Area. I am from a middle class family in a middle size town (if I could say 1 million population is middle sized) of southwest Japan. I am in my late 20s. I am trained in rhetorical and communication theories.

Then there are also "not me" characteristics in this thesis. I am not a high school drop out, although I almost became one. I am not a male blue collar laborer. I am neither poor nor rich. I am not a celebrity, single mother, politician, or corporate leader. I am not from a big city; however, I am not from the countryside, either. The list of "not me" characteristics can go on. By defining "me" and "not me" characteristics, audiences and "I" learn better who the speaker is, where the speaker is located.

An audience of a message or an invited audience is the other component of a discourse. An audience or "you" responds to the speaker. "You" thinks and acts in a way the speaker wants, expects, or anticipates "you" to. In this thesis, audiences of the message are my thesis committee members who are highly educated people with diverse backgrounds: three white males (but one speaks Japanese) and a female Taiwanese professor who understands some aspects of Japanese culture. If the thesis is completed and accepted by the committee, college students who are interested in rhetoric may constitute another audience. An audience-void of the message is persons who are not interested in rhetoric and education, persons who do not go to college, and persons who

cannot read in English. By defining the audiences as who they are and are not, I as a speaker choose the words that are the most effective to induce their involvement and shape their understanding.

The third feature is message: what is said/what is not said. I as a speaker say things from my perspective. I say things because I have a purpose. I have a purpose to change the education system in which I experienced frustration and meaninglessness as a student. Then, what is not said here is opinions that do not apply to my purpose, opinions based upon an experience that I have not had. A person who has a different background from mine may describe Japanese education differently. A person who is from a metropolitan area or a countryside may interpret the debate differently.

In rhetorical contextualization, a present speaker, a present message, and a present audience are made meaningful by bringing into view speakers who are excluded from speaking, messages that are silenced or erased, and audiences who are not included in the rhetorical process. An invited speaker is judged based on the other speakers who were also invited or the speaker who was not invited. A message is criticized based upon a message sent by other speakers or a message that is not brought up. An audience is compared with another audience who is invited or who is not invited. In this study, four main political camps are critically examined based on their favorite audiences,

interest areas, and vested interests in society. They are also compared with other groups of people who were not invited as speakers or audiences. Their messages are compared with the voices that did not come out in the debate.

Paulo Freire's Emancipation Pedagogy as the Silenced Third Persona

In this analysis, rhetorical contextualization is used as the method of criticism. However, as a critical alternative, Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy is construed as the silenced message, or in Wander's words (1984), the third persona. Paulo Freire is a Brazilian scholar, who pursued liberation of the illiterate masses in Brazil by dialogical instruction. In his book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1972) analyzes the political and economic structure as divided between the oppressor and the oppressed. He diagnoses the problem of the oppressed to be that they are implanted with the consciousness of themselves as "non-humans." This consciousness imprisons the powerless in the social trap to such an extent that they will never be able to escape unless they begin to see themselves differently.

Freire points out that when those who are oppressed acknowledge the fact that they are the powerless in the society, their humanization starts. When people who are oppressed can see the injustices that subjugate them as things or animals, they can then question the oppressors as the model of mankind. One of Freire's students says:

When I began this course I was naive, and when I found out how naive I was, I started to get critical. (p. 20)

Paulo Freire's intent was to empower the oppressed in the society; he wanted to transform the illiterate by implanting seeds in their critical consciousness via education. Freire purported to cultivate the power of critical thinking among the oppressed of the society. He believed that those disadvantaged individuals could make a change in the social system by interpreting their status. Empowering the oppressed, however, implied an imminent threat--the powerful had to give up their interests.

The oppressors try to maintain the present so that they can maintain their status quo. To be equal with others is for them to lose their right to be respected as special human beings and to dominate others. To have privilege is for them to be fair. They feel uncomfortable when their status of having privilege is threatened. People with power consciously or unconsciously try to maintain the existing social system so that their power remains intact and unchallenged. Therefore, often it is not the powerful who release the oppressed from the social trap; rather, it is up to the oppressed to release themselves by fighting for their equality and their rights.

Freire realized that the conventional mode of instruction was the master's tool which was inappropriate to transform the oppressed into people with

critical consciousness. Power relations existed in the conventional instruction. The teacher imposed his/her power over the students by simply feeding knowledge to the students. Students, therefore, did not have to think. What they had was not their own thoughts, but the thoughts someone else created.

Freire (1972) differentiates two styles of instruction: banking education and liberating education. In banking education, the conventional mode of instruction, the role of the students is that of a deposit box; they are mere objects. They are the object like a container to be filled with information. The role of a teacher is that of a bank clerk in that a bank clerk (teacher) deposits money (information) into a deposit box (students). His task is to fill the student with information:

In the "banking" concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. (p. 58)

Banking education prevents students from thinking critically, knowing their world, and being conscious about themselves; thus, the power structure is maintained as it is.

The easy way to teach is to make students memorize. But memorize what? The material is chosen by the powerful. No matter how much students gain in knowledge, memorization can offer only a single way of thinking: the logic

that will support the existing social order. It will not help to raise questions about the system. It will not help the oppressed to understand that they are not given the right to think and to speak.

Freire employs dialogical instruction: education which raises the consciousness of being human through discourse. In this way, a teacher and a student can bring out their own voices and thoughts. Liberation education, that is, "consists in acts of cognition, not transference of information" (p. 67). By adopting this mode of education, a teacher and his/her student can learn about each other's world. They create the consciousness of being in the world through conversation. Liberating education empowers the students as conscious beings. The banking concept of education simply transmits the knowledge to the deposit box; however, liberating education transforms the consciousness of both the students and the teachers.

Freire's dialectical communication instruction encouraged his students to think independently. It raised the consciousness of being human among the illiterate. Before, they did not exist in the society or at least were not treated as human because they could not participate in the national development. After they had Freire's dialectical instruction, all of a sudden their world changed. They became human beings, and their voices could not be easily erased or ignored. Dialectical instruction gave them skills to think about themselves,

and to express how they think about themselves. Freire's critical pedagogy was useful to bring out silenced or ignored identities into the public. They could utter opinions in their own voices that had never been mentioned in messages propagated by the powerful.

Since rhetorical contextualization invites multiple perspectives, we may use Freire's Emancipation pedagogy as holistic void to examine the Japanese educational system, because the purpose of Freire's emancipation pedagogy was to make students critical individuals. The Japanese education system did not educate students to be critical persons. In this study, students who suffered in the excruciating competitiveness of the education system are focused. Unlike Freire's audience, they are not illiterate; in fact, they are highly educated in a way the society approves. However, like the peasants in Brazil, they do not have the power to raise their own questions and to speak up in their own voices, because they are trained not to. They are taught to memorize huge amounts of information; they learn to accept the system as it is.

In the debate on educational reform in Japan, many people from various fields were invited. However, most of the participants had some kind of power or high social status in society. Or at least, they had access to bring out their own voices in public. The people with power in Japan were the beneficiaries of the existing examination system. It was difficult for them to hear voices of

the oppressed. According to Trinh, none is as deaf as those who do not want to hear. Although the debate was opened up to everybody, the people who did not know how to raise questions, how to bring their own voices out in public, or how to challenge and change the existing system, could not participate and hence were excluded. Those were students—people who most needed a change. But the majority of them who had received instruction based on the banking communication model could hardly raise questions about their world. They were not trained to do so. They needed to cope with their immediate challenges as dictated by entrance examinations.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEMS IN JAPANESE EDUCATION SYSTEMS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is an informational chapter. Readers of this thesis may not know about the history of the Japanese educational system, so this chapter explains how education became a social problem. This does not intend to provide a detailed history.¹⁰ Aspects that are relevant to the case under study are summarized. This chapter provides sociopolitical contexts of the debate by covering a brief sketch of the education system, its problems, the political parties and interest groups in contemporary Japan, and the timing of Nakasone's interest in domestic issues.

The Catalyst

A number of crimes had been committed by both teachers and students before education became a serious public issue in the early 1980s. At that time, the mass media frequently covered school violence and juvenile delinquency, and "it became headline news as a result of successive violent incidents involving school-age children" (Hayano, 1993, p. 48). Several incidents attracted the public's attention. First, a junior high school in Tokyo would not

¹⁰ For a detailed history of the Japanese education system, see Ikezaki, S., & Matsushima, E. (1990). A chronological table of Japanese Education; Nishio, K., (1992). Education and Freedom: the report of the Central Education Council and the University reform; Ryuzaki, H. (1994). The point of view for the education reform.

allow several of its students to attend classes because of their bad behavior.

The school ordered the students to stay at home and help the family businesses.

In return, the school promised to give them diplomas. Second, ten students in

Yokohama attacked homeless people. They attacked homeless people, because,

according to these students, they made the town dirty. Third, a junior high

school teacher in Tokyo stabbed a student in self-defense. Since a number of

violent incidents occurred in this school and several teachers had been

hospitalized, he kept a knife with him at all times for protection. Many other

incidents attracted public attention, and society was frustrated by the news

related to school problems. Problems associated with juvenile delinquency,

particularly acts of school violence involving junior high school students,

were increasing. Hayano (1993) says:

According to National Police Agency (NPA) statistics, the number of assaults on teachers in 1982 was well over four times the number for 1978, and that for 1982 was double that for 1981. (p.48)

Although it was not a strong political issue, as a response to these incidents, the Japanese society as a whole searched for the reasons and their solutions.

Gradually, the focus shifted to the competitive nature of the entrance

examination for higher education and the quality of school instruction.

A Brief Historical Sketch of Education Problems

During the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868), the kind of family one was born into determined his/her social status. When one was born into a farmer's family, one had to become a farmer. When a boy was born into a Samurai family, he had to be a Samurai with no doubt. But after the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century, it no longer mattered who one's parents were. The reputation or status of the school one graduated from was more important than the name of the family (Sengoku, Kanegae, & Satoh, 1987, p.17). In Japanese society, the social status of a person was determined by his/her academic achievement. Academic achievement was measured by whether one passed the entrance examination for higher education and by the status of the school s/he graduated from. Although more flexible than the Tokugawa class system, the contemporary educational class system has posed a significant problem for the society.

The problem lay in the entrance examination system, during the 1970s, university entrance examinations generated the most problems in education. Since then, the competitiveness cultivated by entrance examinations shifted from the college level to the high school level. In the 1980s, the influence of entrance examinations exerted its impact on students of much younger age, especially those who were to go to private junior high schools and private

primary schools.¹¹ An article in Yomiuri News¹² on January 20, 1983, covered news about parents who had waited overnight in a procession in front of a private junior high school to submit application forms for the entrance examination. These parents would do anything for their children's education because of a firm belief that if one went to a number-one high school, s/he would be able to get into a number-one university. If one went to an inferior high school, s/he could only expect to attend an inferior college, etc. The rank of a high school was closely associated with the rank of the college. A parent commented to the interviewer from the newspaper, "Entering this school gives a ticket to a prestigious college to my child" (Yomiuri News, January 20, 1983).

Success in high school and college entrance examinations could be predicted by the relative prestige of trial tests. When it was time for parents and their child to consider which school the child was likely to get in, their decision was basically informed by the relative prestige. Which school s/he wanted to go to was less important than which school s/he could get into.

Certainty was more important than one's desire. A student chose which

¹¹ In the 1990s, some parents in the Tokyo area are eager to send their children to private kindergartens that are under the management of prestigious colleges (Tamura, A. 1994).

¹² Yomiuri News is a nation-wide newspaper with a local section. There are three major nation-wide newspapers: Yomiuri News, Asahi News, and Mainichi News. These three are designed for general mass.

school's examination to take by his/her potential success. Since the high school's relative prestige was important, the grades earned during junior high school became the center of the competition. In other words, the social status a student might have in his/her future was determined at the stage of junior high school education. Of course, if a student realized that s/he needed to study more to get into a prestigious college at an early stage of high school, s/he might have been able to catch up. That was, however, not the case for the majority. If one wanted to go to a top college, s/he had to start as early as elementary school or junior high school.

A problem was also found in the relative prestige of trial tests: the scale employed to determine students' achievement. The method employed here was based solely on the score students obtained in the examinations. A person was ranked on the scale measured in examinations. To maximize students' relative prestige and their success at entrance examinations, instruction was based solely on examination material. Teachers had to conduct classes by focusing on the part that would most likely be on the examinations rather than on the part that would help the development of critical thinking or that would motivate creative interests. However, several advantages made the relative prestige hold its hegemony. First, it was easy for the school to sustain its ranking by screening out those who had low potential. Second, by screening

in students of similar academic achievement, teaching materials and strategies could be formalized.

In the debate, some participants argued that educators overvalued the relative prestige. However, nobody could provide a concrete solution, because there was another undeniable advantage of the relative prestige: efficiency and fairness (Nishio, 1992). If the students had a similar level of achievement in a school, teachers could provide uniform instruction: this increased efficiency. Also, if they selected students based upon examination scores, there was no room for favoritism: this assured fairness. Efficiency and fairness could not easily co-exist, because generally their natures contradicted each other. Efficiency was to divide students by their achievement levels. If a school did so, the instruction was not fair to everyone. However, in the Japanese education system they did co-exist. To restructure the system, the balance of efficiency and fairness would be lost. If efficiency were opted, fairness was abandoned. It was difficult for the society to dichotomize the two; they did not want to lose either of them.

Another problem with the examination system was that most examinations required a huge amount of information. This was called "rote training tendency" (知育偏重) in that education was focused on how much raw information a student had retained. Students had to memorize much

information. They just needed to pump information into their brain; they didn't need to think. As mentioned in the previous chapter, 94% of school students went to high school. College examinations became more and more difficult. Thus, high school students had to memorize more material than before.

The article in The Economist, on April 21, 1990, that was introduced in the first chapter, raised the question about the amount of memorization students had to work on. Since the examination got more difficult every year, the curricula the schools offered also became complicated. For example, as reviewed by the Ministry of Education in 1987, the number of Chinese characters and English vocabulary in the junior high school curriculum was increased. At the same time, class hours were cut. So practically, students needed to consume more material in less time.

To maximize success in the entrance examination, parents sent children to cram schools: supplementary schools run by private organizations. The goal of cram schools was to let students increase their relative prestige and make it possible to take the entrance examination offered by the school they wanted to attend, and eventually to make it possible for them to pass it. Cram schools became popular in the early 1980s. They offered intensive courses to teach tips to examination success. The overflow of cram schools all over Japan, on

the other hand, revealed a serious problem in that students were pressured into the entrance examination in their lives at the regular school, home, and cram school. The government could not control cram schools, because they were business organizations. What they did was to reinforce the need of parents for their children's success!

Regular schools were no longer respected; although teachers in regular schools also had to respond to the demands of parents to find a school that met the relative prestige of each student. The teachers' mission here was to get all students into high schools. There should be no student who did not have a school to go to. Teachers had to be objective in finding a school for a student. Even though a student wanted to go to a school, if her/his score was not good enough for the school level, the teacher had to recommend other schools where the student could surely pass the test. Also, teachers had to evaluate students by their test results which were determined by the students' skill in memorizing. Teachers could not use a student's special talent as an evaluation criterion.

In the 1980s, most of the classes at public schools consisted of 40-45 students. Teachers could not pay attention to each student in the class. So they tended to focus on the students at the middle level. Students with good grades could study by themselves, but the students with bad grades had no way to

catch up in the class. Diligent teachers offered supplementary classes for those who had bad grades. Since the supplementary class was voluntary, a teacher could not do anything if the student was not interested in studying at all. Some students might not be interested in the learning style and memorization, but might like to think on their own. What the teacher did in the supplementary class was to bank information.

Once a student failed the entrance examination for college, there were two choices left. Those whose parents did not have enough money had to find employment and say farewell to school forever. Those whose parents could afford cram schools could go to cram school (予備校) for one or two years until they could pass the entrance exam. This practice created very heavy pressure on students. The fact that a student had to sacrifice one or two years in order to pass an exam was severely criticized by parents.

Moreover, unlike in the United States, it was almost impossible to restart one's academic career. There were three reasons. First, it was difficult to go to school and work at the same time. Considering the living expense and average work hours of laborers in Japan, it was very difficult to go to school without some kind of financial support. Second, preparation for entrance examinations took a considerable amount of time and effort. It was very difficult to go back to school once one went into the work world. For example,

a high school student studied at a regular school, cram school, and home; whereas, the person who had a job could study at cram school and home only. Compared with full time students, his/her schedule was limited. It was difficult for him/her to compete with full time students. Third, corporations favored people who just graduated from schools. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years. There were two types of recruiting systems in the Japanese job market: a new graduate and a mid-career hired.¹³

When students approached the final year of high school or college, they started looking for the companies which hired the new graduates. Companies trained the new graduates and allowed individual exploration of skills. The companies even preferred that the new graduates not have previous working experience, so that they could educate them to be ideal employees for the company. For those who wanted to take a job as a mid-career hired, the company expected that they already had specific skills that would bring immediate profit to the company.

"When the corporate leaders look for workers, they look for highly literate, numerate, and hardworking conformists" (The Economist, April 21, 1990, p.21). The Japanese school system produced such ideal industrial workers. The rank of a job type was based on the educational level of the person. Large scale

¹³ This system is similar to American practice of recruiting.

enterprises favored students from schools with high relative prestige. Relative prestige and company performance size were closely associated (Yonemoto, 1993, p.192). This meant workers who had the same types of educational background were uniformly gathered into the same rank in a job. So the company could easily train them to promote its business.¹⁴ As mentioned above, business organizations wanted fresh graduates so that they could train these new workers to their own preference. If they did so, no one would ask questions about the system. They might be ideal workers for assembling machines, but not for creating new things and proposing new ideas. They didn't know how to raise questions or how to persuade their boss.

It was believed that promotion in a company went by the educational background of the person. Moreover, in some companies, there were so-called school factions (学閥). They were made up of groups graduated from the prestigious universities. This created power in the company for them. Those who graduated from university A and were hired by a company which had an A-university faction would have a faster promotion. For example, it was widely believed that if one wanted to be a bureaucrat, s/he had to have graduated from Tokyo University; otherwise, s/he would not have fast paced promotions. This was just belief, but it was a strong belief among parents.

¹⁴ To note, efficiency in school background also had an influence here.

This power of school factions was another reason that parents wanted their children to enter prestigious schools. The school name gave potential power in the company and in the society. What they learned in the school was not as important as which school they were graduated from (Nishio, 1994). The class system based on relative prestige and school background created problems and dissatisfaction. The correlation of school level and business organization provoked intense competition among students.

Examinations, which were mainly of primary interest to parents, teachers, and corporate leaders, suppressed the real interest and critical thinking of students. It also forced a student to give up sharing a life with friends and family. What they learned about the world was solely based on books and blackboard. Teachers existed to give explanations about what was written in books. Their functions in the classrooms were the same as cassette tapes or video tapes. Knowledge did not come from a rich conversation about the world; it came from the contents of books. Students' opinions, analytical skills, skills of descriptions, which were necessary to live in the community and to protect their rights in society, were not important in examinations. Students memorized data and answered the questions in the examination.

The rank that was related to the examination also suppressed the ability of students to learn things as a part of the community; that was, to deal with

people. The rank of a student in the class, the school rank, and the job rank distorted the student's view of the world. What students cared about was "who was better?" or "who was the loser?" Because the answer was always found in the examinations, these students were considerably deskilled. This trained incapacity was grotesque. They were trained to respond to "accuracy" as narrowly defined by exams. So things were either right or wrong. They could think only in terms of examinations, sanctioned "binary exposition": a correct answer or wrong answer.

In the current education system, students did not get a chance to learn to argue, negotiate, and reach mutual understanding with others. They were discouraged from raising their own questions. Ideally, a school was supposed to teach its students to be citizens of a highly civilized society. It was supposed to offer a chance to learn the skill of communication. In the current school system, school served a different function. If one just wanted to get into a top university, s/he did not have to go to high school. S/he just needed to study and pass the university certificate examination.¹⁵ In this way, s/he was able to organize his/her schedule to prepare for the entrance examination for universities. S/he just memorized many books at home and in cram school. However, more than 94% of junior high school graduates went to high school.

¹⁵ This is an equivalent to a high school diploma.

Why? The merit of high school was that s/he could make friends, that s/he could belong to a community to work with. However, school did not offer this chance.

School violence triggered debate over education issues. School violence might or might not be related to the pressure of the examination systems over school students. We could not prove the relationship of those two. However, we could be certain of one thing: Japanese society was craving for solutions to the problems in the education system. People were patiently waiting for a chance to speak up. They were waiting to make sure that the problem was not one individual's, but others' as well. This craving gave the society an opportunity to reconsider the system: the examination system, the school system, and the whole system in the nation. Political groups, mass media, schools, and parents sought answers to the problems. Prime Minister Nakasone came out to organize those who were interested in educational reform.

Sociopolitical Contexts of the Debate

Contextualizing Political Parties and Interest Groups

When the educational issues became major problems in society, there were five major political groups in Japanese politics: the Liberal Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Clean Political Party, and

the Communist Party. In terms of their political positions, the Liberal Democratic Party was the most conservative group and the Communist Party was the most radical group. The Socialist party was the second-most radical group. The Clean Political Party and the Social Democratic Party were between the Liberal Democratic Party and the Socialist Party.

In terms of the size of the groups, the Liberal Democratic Party was the biggest of all. This group had controlled Japanese politics for 45 years after World War II ended. The Liberal Democratic Party was called the "government party," because this group mainly handled decision making. The Socialist Party was the second biggest group, and was the opposition party as in contrast to the LDP Government party. The Socialist Party often influenced policy making of the Liberal Democratic Party and in the Diet; however, it did not advance beyond the second round until the 1990s. The LDP was too strong a political force. The Social Democratic party was the third group. The Clean Political Party was the fourth group. This group was privately related to one of the Buddhism sects and the believers of this religious group supported the party. The Communist party was the fifth-ranked group. These political parties formed one group in the debate over education reform.

The Ministry of Education was another group who participated in the debate. This was not a political party; this was one of 12 government

departments.¹⁶ The Ministry of Education, as a part of the central government, handled the Japanese education system. Whenever there was a debate on an educational issue, the Ministry of Education played an important role in determining enactment of the new system. There was a local education committee called the "School Board" under each prefecture. The school board and the Ministry of Education were not directly related under the law; however, practically, their jobs were related. As an educational executive body of prefectures and their cities, towns, and villages, school boards¹⁷ managed public schools and handled school administrative issues, curriculum, textbooks, and promotion of teachers. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education dealt with the central issues of education such as budget distribution and basic curricula for each grade.

The Education Interest Faction also participated in the debate. This was not a political party, per se. This was a part of the Liberal Democratic Party that specifically handled education issues. Since the Liberal Democratic Party

¹⁶ Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Home Affairs.

¹⁷ This group was established after World War II. Originally, establishment of local school boards was proposed by US education reformers who aimed at decentralizing the school administration in Japan. The purpose of the local school board, according to the US reformers, was to popularize education, decentralize educational administration, and assure the autonomous character of education (Hosotani, et al., 1978).

included a large number of politicians, they tended to form factions inside the party based on their interests or previous career backgrounds. Members of the Education Interest Faction had some kind of background in the education field or had interests in the field. Therefore, the education ministers were closely related to this group.

The last group was the Teachers' Union. The Teachers' Union was, as literally understood, a union formed by public school teachers. Their major political association was with the Socialist Party; a minor one was with the Communist Party. Their main policy was peace education in school education. The Union opposed the use of the Japanese flag and the National anthem in public school education. According to the Union, the Japanese national flag and national anthem continued the nationalist ideology of wartime Japan. The Teachers' Union had been fighting this issue since the group was established in 1945. This group was a long-term opponent of the Ministry of Education. For example, the Ministry of Education claimed that the peace education of the Teachers' Union meant an education designed to create a socialist society (Yomiuri News, March 12, 1983). Nakasone also criticized the Teachers' Union generally for being too political. The Teachers' Union replied by saying that the problems of Japanese education were created by the Ministry of Education.

There was another teachers' union, named the Japan High School Teachers' Union. This group was more quiet in terms of political participation. The Teachers' Union was more vocal and actively participated in politics, although the number of the Teachers' Union members rapidly decreased¹⁸ in the 1980s.

The Timing of Nakasone's Announcement to Focus on Domestic Issues and Education

A Yomiuri News public opinion poll conducted on February 23, 1983, showed a low ratio of public support for Nakasone's cabinet. Forty-five percent of the people who responded to the survey showed dissatisfaction with Nakasone's policy. Only 34.5% showed satisfaction. Four days earlier, Asahi News conducted a public opinion poll for Nakasone. Its result also showed low public support for Nakasone's cabinet: 29% of the people who responded supported him and 43% of the people demonstrated dissatisfaction with Nakasone. In Asahi News survey, the support ratio fell from 37% in an earlier survey to 29% in a few months. Nakasone lost public support mainly because of his foreign policy, which included military budget increases, and his economic policy.

¹⁸ The membership declined to 51% in 1982. The overall ratio of teachers who did not belong to any union was 31.6% in 1982 (Yomiuri News, November 7, 1982.)

On June 6, 1983, Nakasone officially declared that he considered education one of his major political agendas and that he would take the initiative in educational reform (Yomiuri News, June 6, 1983). According to him, the Ministry of Education was not powerful enough to promote reform. On the other hand, the Communist party, the Socialist party, and the Teachers' Union demonstrated their disapproval of Nakasone's intentions, saying that his intention was to establish Nationalist education and eventually lead Japan into fascism. The media and other political parties also suspected that Nakasone's intention was to gain favor in the next election.

When Nakasone demonstrated his interest in school violence and other education issues, the other political parties were confused. They were confused mainly because Nakasone did not have a political background or career in educational issues. The Ministry of Education and the Education Interest Faction felt Nakasone was invading their territory (Yomiuri News, June 6, 1983). For them, it was a vote of distrust by Nakasone. The Teachers' Union, the Socialist party, and the Communist party pointed out that Nakasone intended the reform to gain public support for his political career. They had a reason to say this because of the low public support for Nakasone shown four months earlier.

However, according to a close associate of Nakasone, Nakasone was personally concerned about school violence, and had been talking about the issue since he became Prime Minister. The close associate of Nakasone also told newspaper interviewers that Nakasone had said he would solve these problems before he found that public support was low and said repeatedly that family ties and the character of students were much more important than grades. Nakasone was willing to have the entire cabinet cooperate to solve the problem of juvenile delinquency. When he announced his interest in education, he commented that the foreign issue had come to an end and now he would concentrate on the domestic issue. But just after several newspapers, including the Yomiuri News and Asahi News, published public opinion polls about Nakasone, he showed his interest on the education issue. The timing of the survey and his announcement caused suspicion among other political groups. The Socialist party, the Communist party, and the Teachers' Union suspected Nakasone's new political agenda was an election tool.

As a first step, Nakasone organized a group named the Round Table Discussion Group for Culture and Education. Since he wanted to listen to various voices on the issue and did not have any concrete idea where to start, he organized people and entrusted the discussion to them. This group was organized to research problems of the contemporary education system in one

year. Nakasone requested this group to discuss education from multiple and longer perspectives, specifically education for the 21st century. The members in this group consisted of a corporate leader, a writer, a private university chairman, the chairman of a broadcasting center, a public university professor, a TV announcer, and a critic. In terms of gender, six males and one female (a writer) were selected. All seven persons had high status in each field. All of them were in their 40s or older. This group was a private advisory body of the Prime Minister; therefore, their party line was Nakasone's.

At the same time, Nakasone ordered the Ministry of Education to review five items: (1) introducing of an English language program in elementary school education; (2) inviting professionals to schools as teachers; (3) lecturing in English at the university level to help returning students from abroad;¹⁹ (4) transferring among universities; and (5) licensing university professors. He also emphasized moral education in school. Nakasone specifically wanted Confucianism to be introduced in moral education. Also, he wanted a review of the 6/3/3 single track school system, because whereas the 6/3/3 school system was based on the US education system where people had a background in

¹⁹ Returning students were students who came back to Japan after having stayed for several years because of government or corporate assignment and relocation of their parents. The number of returning students was growing. Since they received education with a different curriculum from Japan's, they needed special education to keep up. These students were disadvantaged in the Japanese examination system.

Christianity and whereas Japan had its own background in Confucianism and Buddhism; the 6/3/3 system was not suited for Japanese society.²⁰

Outlining the education issue, Nakasone proposed a "7-point plan" on December 11, 1983. Its contents included: (1) 6/3/3 system review; (2) a review of the high school entrance examination system; (3) a review of the university entrance examination system; (4) promotion of volunteer works or group activities to help children's character formation; (5) moral education; (6) educational adaptation to people who travel and work internationally; and (7) a teachers' retooling program and invitation for professionals to school as teachers.

²⁰ Not only Nakasone, but also many other groups including the Ministry of Education, the Teachers' Union claimed that the 6/3/3 system caused problems. They blamed this system as if the 6/3/3 system caused all kinds of problems, because the later 3 years (high school) required an entrance examination.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE DEBATE

Rhetorically Contextualizing the Educational Debate

This chapter is separated into 2 phases: Nakasone's major plans, and the selection of the Provisional Education Reform Council members. The major political camps that were involved in these two stages were Nakasone, the Ministry of Education, the Education Interest Faction, the Teachers' Union, the Social Democratic party, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and the Clean Political Party. In this section, opinions of these political camps regarding Nakasone's plans and the selecting of the Provisional Education Reform Council members are analyzed.

Nakasone's Blueprint: A Seven-Point Proposal

6/3/3 School System Review

The Japanese school system consists of 6 years of primary education, 3 years of lower middle education (or junior high school), and 3 years of upper middle (or high school) education. This system is called a single track system or the standardization of curriculum, because it requires all children to go through it, and no exception or other track is allowed. In other words, all 7-year-old children are in the first grade in elementary school, and all 13-year-

old students are in the first grade in junior high school. All students who are of the same age have the same curriculum. Since the first nine years are compulsory, a local school board determines a district for each elementary school and junior high school so that it can ensure a space for every school aged child.

High school education is not compulsory; therefore, it is beyond the control of a school district. Ninety-four percent of junior high school graduates continue on into high school. The high school system, in comparison, is more flexible in that students, without being assigned to a district, can choose a high school. However, because of the entrance examination, it is extremely competitive. In other words, some high schools are more desirable than others because of their ability to push students through the college entrance examination. There are always more applicants than the number of available seats in high schools. An entrance examination is offered by each high school or prefecture to select students who have the appropriate learning skills to study at the school. In other words, a school offers an examination in order to, in a Japanese expression, "shake off" (振る, 落とす) extra applicants.

Two main criticisms of the 6/3/3 school system were brought up by politicians and business people. First, it killed creativity and special talents of students. Even though a student had creativity or a special talent in a field, the

student had to take the same level of class at the same speed as other students. S/he could not develop his/her talent in a specific field because of the system. Everyone took the same step. This was the key point of standardization. People who participated in the debate of the educational reform called this kind of equality "pseudo-equality" (偽平等).

Second, it ignored students who could not keep up with class materials. A student who was behind in his/her curriculum was ignored in the classroom because a teacher could not spend time exclusively with him/her. There were many students to take care of in the class. Moreover, a teacher must cover a certain amount of class materials in a pre-scheduled, standardized time frame. Keeping up with the schedule was more important than how well each student understood the material. Because of the system, even though a student did not fully complete a curriculum, s/he had to go forward. The curriculum moved so fast that once s/he failed to understand the material, his/her achievement level would be affected later.

When Nakasone proposed his 7-point plan of education reform, he did not mention any exact reform plan. He emphasized only the introduction of "flexibility" in the system. As for the 6/3/3 school system, several opinions came out from various groups, and Nakasone promised to consider those suggestions by having them refereed by the Ministry of Education.

Twelve years of compulsory education (6 years of primary education and 6 years of middle education) were proposed by the Teachers' Union (Yomiuri News, July 20, 1983). It suggested this because the combination of junior high school and high school education would bring about the elimination of the high school entrance examination,²¹ and nine years of compulsory education were not enough to complete the curriculum. Nakasone and the Ministry of Education studied this issue; however, this plan was turned down because of the budget. They found out that they could not afford to create six year middle schools all over Japan. So the proposal would be discussed and worked on by the Ministry of Education in the future.

A 5/4 school system was proposed: five years of primary education and four years of lower middle education. This system would allow junior high school students to have one more year to prepare for the entrance examination into high school. The argument was that the 6th grade students had the ability to move to a higher level of curriculum; therefore, it was better to move 6th graders up to junior high school. This plan was turned down because the Ministry of Education did not have sufficient data to determine whether this would be better than the existing 6/3/3 system.

²¹ The Socialist Party and the Communist Party also proposed the elimination of the high school entrance examination (Yomiuri News, June 19, 1983).

Another suggestion was to set the entrance age of compulsory education at five years of age instead of seven as was practiced. This plan was originally proposed by the 13th Central Education Council in 1971 and turned down by the Ministry of Education because it did not find any necessity to implement this. When Nakasone started talking about a system review, this plan came back again. So, at this stage, it is difficult to determine who proposed this plan in Nakasone's reform. A member of the Clean Political Party suggested Nakasone establish "a sample school" using this plan. Nakasone responded that he would consider it (Yomiuri News, February 10, 1983). The 13th Central Education Council advanced this plan in its suggestion that children in kindergarten and students at the lower division of elementary school could have a similar level of curricula.

This plan to matriculate five-year-olds would make kindergarten compulsory, so that kindergarten children could start preparing for the elementary school curriculum. However, this suggestion, like the 5/4 proposal, did not explain why this was better than the existing 6/3/3 system. Therefore, it was turned down, as well. Moreover, voices from the general public, specifically from groups of mothers, argued that this would kill innovative thinking rather than enhance it.

In sum, all three proposals dealt with the grade system of the schools. Except for the 6/6 school system, they did not deal with the original problems: students' innovative thinking being killed, the competition of high school entrance examination being too high, and some students having difficulty in the classroom because the lectures moved so fast.

Skipping a grade by a partial unit system or a complete unit system (no grade) were the last suggestions.²² This proposal was brought up by the 13th Central Education Council. It also suggested the following: (1) class divided by learning ability in junior high school²³; (2) a well coordinated curriculum from kindergarten to university; (3) more elective courses in junior high and high school; and (4) a unit system for skipping a grade. Among these four suggestions, the most important was the latter. This plan would help students with special talents to go up to levels appropriate for them. Also, this system would help students who failed to understand the material to repeat the class. This proposal tried to establish a flexible link between grade and learning in order to replace the rigid link between grade and age. This last proposal addressed the two major criticisms of the existing 6/3/3 system in that the

²² Later, Nakasone's Round Table Discussion Groups also suggested this (Yomiuri News, March 23, 1984).

²³ A Yomiuri News survey revealed that fifty-four percent of parents who responded to the survey opposed this. Eventually this plan disappeared.

students would have more choices to enhance their interests and would have the option to repeat the curriculum that they failed to understand.

From the reforms proposed by the Teachers' Union, we may infer potential consequences. A 12-year compulsory education would be more effective if the system could eliminate the entrance examination for high school. However, to prepare for the university entrance examination, the school could offer faster paced lectures and more difficult material at an earlier stage of middle education so that students could concentrate on practicing drills for examinations in the latter part of the program. Six years of middle education could become a place to prepare for the university entrance examination. This would cause more competition for the examination. This would also cause competition to get into a prestigious private middle school at an earlier age. This last was a major concern of the Ministry of Education.

The Teachers' Union's plan was turned down by the Ministry of Education because of funding. This showed that the Ministry of Education was the judge of the proposals. In its plan, the Teachers' Union was the speaker who claimed it was representative of the general public. Its audience was Nakasone and the Ministry of Education. The basic message was the 6/6 system. The Teachers' Union ignored people who were concerned with university entrance examinations, specifically high school teachers, parents, and students.

Elimination of entrance examinations was helpful for junior high school teachers. However, it would affect the latter stage: university entrance examinations. The Teachers' Union did not talk about the university entrance examination in the system review. This was the void in its message.

Second, a 5/4 school system still required preparation for entrance examinations. Reducing competition was one of the reasons for the reform, but the plan might have expanded the examination system.

Third, a five-year-old-entrance for compulsory education might force children into rote training two years earlier than in the existing system. It was more important for them to play outside and learn to communicate with people than to stay in classrooms and learn how to read books. This plan did not address the original problems: innovative thinking and bottom level students. What was the benefit of setting the entrance age at five? Or what would the five-year-old entrance into compulsory education do to solve these two problems? This plan was originally proposed by the Central Education Council in 1971. Also, some politicians, such as a member of the Clean Political Party, supported this proposal. They were the speakers. The audience was Nakasone and the Ministry of Education. Cramming lectures which oppressed children was not addressed. The plan ignored the parents and children as audiences.

Considering a fourth alternative, skipping a grade, would give an advantage to students with a special talent. It would allow students with a high achievement level to go to prestigious universities at an early age. However, definition of a special talent was vague in this proposal. A special talent could be thought of as an ability to memorize important materials in the five major subjects.²⁴ Also, it would produce stay-back students. Students who failed to keep up with learning materials might have to delay taking university entrance examinations. This system would assist elite-route education. It would not help students at the bottom level. Although this reform plan offered some flexibility called for by Nakasone, it created another problem—more competition at the top level. The reform was to save students who suffered, especially those at the bottom rungs. The society, the media, and the politicians believed that students at the bottom caused school violence and juvenile delinquency.

The speaker for this plan was the 13th Central Education Council which was under the direct control of the Ministry of Education. Its audience was the Ministry of Education. Most of the members were successful products of the existing educational system. A message sent to the Ministry of Education was "skipping a grade using the unit system." Here the missing audience was

²⁴ Japanese language, mathematics, social education, science, and foreign language (English).

students and parents who were afraid that if their children could not join the competition of university entrance examination at an early stage, they would stay at the bottom level. A missing message was that this plan may divide students into two categories: the top and the bottom. Also, the plan did not challenge the view of education as ranking oriented. Although the plan mentioned critical thinking, it did not define it or discuss its purpose.

Since the Meiji Restoration in the late 1800s, Japan's education was reformed to upgrade the quality of education so that business and industry could compete with other nations'. But Japan left out people who could not participate in competition. The new reform plan might solve this problem, but it also carried risks of spurring another problem. Those who proposed the plans were themselves the most successful products of Japan's education system. They did not understand the voices of powerless people. They believed the 6/3/3 system review was equal to education reform, and that if they changed the 6/3/3 system, they would solve the problem. In these plans, they did not challenge the rote training instruction employed in school education. Because of the missing parts in the message, the level of the discussion stayed the same. The plan would not eliminate the burden of parents and students.

High School Entrance Examination System

On August 23, 1963, the Ministry of Education altered a part of school education regulation and ordered all high schools to offer an entrance examination to their applicants (Ikezaki and Matsushima, 1990). It was enacted to organize mass applicants for high school. Even though in some cases the number of applicants did not exceed the number of students the school could accommodate, each school had to offer an entrance examination. Since then, the practice of entrance examinations has been firmly established.

In the case of public high schools, a prefecture offered the same examination for applicants of all high schools in a region. In practice, all public high schools in a prefecture offered the same examination to their applicants on the same day. Memorization of material learned in junior high school was the key to success. The examination did not encourage thinking or problem solving. Nor did it foster students' ability to define/frame problems in their own terms.

High school ranking was directly related to college ranking. Therefore, applicants tried to get into prestigious high schools in order to maximize their chances of going to prestigious colleges. This in turn affected junior high school education. Even though examinations should be based on junior high school curricula, lectures at a junior high school were dictated by test

materials included in the high school entrance examination. Examinations, in other words, had become an end in themselves rather than a means to advance education.

A test that lasted for a few hours could not possibly cover everything taught in a three-year curriculum at junior high school; examinations emphasized some topics while excluding others. Knowing what the examination emphasizes, junior high school and cram school teachers lectured accordingly. The upshot was, the high school examination dictated junior high school education. It was memorization oriented. Teachers lectured and there was little discussion.

In his plan, Nakasone wanted to introduce a "flexible (柔軟性) and elastic (弾力性) system."²⁵ He made two main suggestions: introduce an essay test and establish teachers' personal evaluation of the students as an entrance criterion. The essay test would show how an individual student thought about an issue. It would judge reasoning skills of an individual.

²⁵ Flexibility and elasticity here meant that the system offered more choices for students and schools. The rigid 6/3/3 school system did not allow an exceptional track: all students had to go through general education of high school, otherwise they could not pass the examination to universities. Nakasone wanted to introduce other tracks. For example, business, technical, or training school students were disadvantaged for the university entrance examination because of their curriculum. Nakasone wanted to establish a system such that many students excluded from the system or those who were not targeted by universities, such as business people or housewives, might also have opportunities to enter universities.

Teachers' personal evaluation of the students, Nakasone's second suggestion, would impart rich information about: (1) the character of a student; (2) scholastic and extra-curricular achievement; and (3) special talents. This meant that junior high school teachers would be required to record these three aspects of a student and send an evaluation to the high school administration where the student applied. Nakasone repeatedly emphasized that "character" was more important than "the score on an examination." He even asked the Ministry of Education if the character of a student could be included as an admission criterion. The Ministry of Education agreed to consider it.

A student responded to a Yomiuri News interviewer regarding Nakasone's flexibility plan, "If a student fails in the exam which is based on individual character, it is worse than failing in the conventional test. There is no hope of improvement." This was a question by students, parents, and schools: how could the character of a student be judged as an admission criterion? Political groups wanted to change the entrance examination system in one way or another. Nakasone's suggestion, however, caused confusion among people affected by the examination. Specifically for schools, it would be too difficult to establish a standardized character criterion. Nakasone and the Ministry of Education suggested shifting the responsibility for the evaluation to teachers

in junior high school. This would leave it up to school teachers to decide how to formulate a report about a student. But teachers would be unwilling to write negative evaluations (Natuski, 1993). Parents would do whatever they could to try to influence teachers in order to obtain a favorable report for their children. Since junior high schools and cram schools were skilled at figuring out what would maximize entrance success, they would surely start to study what kind of "character" a high school preferred, and they would help to produce reports accordingly. If a student failed to pass the entrance examination, his/her parents would blame the teacher.²⁶ This plan would put more pressure on school teachers, and pit parents against teachers.

In the plans to introduce an essay test and teachers' personal evaluation of the students, Nakasone was the speaker. The purpose of these suggestions was to introduce flexibility in the high school examination system. His target audience was the Ministry of Education. Nakasone excluded junior high school teachers, students, and parents. He never challenged the examination system itself, or the purpose of education. The use of entrance examinations to "shake-off" surplus applicants remained intact. Because of the purpose of examination, education relied heavily on rote training rather than on

²⁶ In a 1970 law suit, a student who failed the entrance examination for high school sued his teacher claiming that the teacher wrote the report about him negatively and this was the main reason he failed.

developing each individual's critical thinking that would help students to raise questions about their world and their lives. Nakasone did not discuss this part. He suggested adaptation within an existing system; he did not challenge a competitive elitist and conformity-oriented pedagogy.

The combination of junior high school and high school education was suggested by the Communist Party. This was the same plan proposed by the Teacher's Union in the 6/3/3 system review. Because of the budget issue, 12 years of compulsory education were eliminated from the proposals. However, six years of middle education remained to be considered. In this plan, the first three years would be compulsory and the latter three years voluntary-compulsory which should eliminate the examination. If a student did not want to go to the latter half of middle school, s/he would not have to go. This would still by-pass the entrance examination. This plan was advanced by the Teachers' Union, and its target audience included teachers, students, and parents. The message was to make high school voluntary-compulsory. The Union did not consider the financial issues in its plan. Because this was a missing part in the message, the Ministry of Education turned down this plan, but promised to discuss it in the next reform.

The Socialist Party and the Communist Party advocated "high school entrance without the examination" (Yomiuri News, June 19, 1983). They

claimed that all applicants must be able to get into high school. This would be made possible by establishing a high school district system. This proposal was related to the plan to make high school voluntary-compulsory. It seemed to solve the problem that they were discussing at that time: high competition for entrance examinations for prestigious schools. However, a newspaper published a complaint from parents. They said, " a student should have a right to decide which school s/he chooses to attend." This plan would make it impossible for a student with high achievement to enter a desirable high school. Parents' complaints revealed their attitudes toward the educational system. On the one hand, they complained that the entrance examination and high school ranking were a heavy burden for themselves and their children. On the other hand, when faced with an inclusive, egalitarian, no-examination system, they wanted to keep the old track so that their children could get into a prestigious school.²⁷

Paulo Freire (1972) pointed out a tragic dilemma of the oppressed.²⁸ They want to be free, he said, but they are afraid to be free. Inside them, the

²⁷ A Yomiuri News Survey on August 17, 1986, also revealed that 90% of the people who responded to the survey complained that Japan was an educational-background-oriented society; however, they wanted their children to have a high education background.

²⁸ Paulo Freire (1972) defines the oppressed as naive, dominated, and dehumanized beings who are acted upon and follow prescribed behaviors, in contrast to the oppressors who act as a model to domesticate men. In this thesis, the oppressed are defined as those who go or have gone through Japan's rigid educational system that has been producing conformists to the

oppressor's image is strongly implanted, so they misunderstand that "to be human" is "to be like the oppressor." Even though they are released from the social trap that keeps them oppressed, a strong image of the oppressor still grips them. For them, to free themselves is to assume the position of the oppressor. The oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressor and his way of life (1972, p.49).

In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressor, to imitate him, to follow him. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in the middle class oppressed, who yearn to be equal to the "eminent" men of the upper class. (p.49)

So long as those who deliberate changes in Japan are bound up in this dilemma, the emancipation pedagogy will not work. They cannot reject the image of the oppressor. They imitate the actions of the oppressor. They see an illusion of joining the class by behaving like the oppressor. They believe that they act their own ways and make their own decisions. For example, determining which school to go to is by their own decision. However, the reason many parents want their children to go to prestigious schools is that they follow the strategy of the oppressor to keep the hierarchy. The oppressors create their own rules to keep their status. To be respected as a

Japanese traditional power structure, and the oppressor as those who internalized the tradition and try to keep the status quo so that the system reproduces domesticated conformists. The positions of the oppressed and the oppressor are not fixed, so the oppressed in a certain situation can be the oppressor in another situation.

member of the class, one needs to behave in a certain way, talk in a certain way, dress in a certain way. This can also be applied to the school name. If you don't go to a certain school, you are not a member of the class.

The oppressed must be their own example of acting and making decisions. At this stage of the educational reform debate, an instrument of oppression was not ejected from parents' consciousness. The parents' group hated the examination and the pressure it placed on their children, but they wanted to insure that their children would attend schools that would increase their chance of entering into the elite. What parents were asking for was how their children could get into a prestigious school. What they wanted was a short-cut for their children to enter the dominant class or, in Freire's words, "to resemble the oppressor." They disliked an educational caste system, but they wanted to keep the hierarchy and a ladder for climbing up the hierarchy. They did not challenge the core ideology behind a system that oppressed them day and night. Nor did they figure out that the prospect of joining the dominant class was merely an illusion because only a small number would be allowed to succeed.

In their plan, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party advocated "no high school entrance examination." Their audiences were students, teachers, and parents. They did not consider what Nakasone and the Ministry of

Education, who evaluated the plan from multiple perspectives, including the budget issue, might think necessary. Also, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party did not carefully study the attitudes of the parents.

The debates over the 6/3/3 system review and over the high school entrance examination review revealed a similar pattern. Several groups proposed plans; however, the voices which came out at the first stage were always either Nakasone's or the Ministry of Education's. It was not what was said that mattered; it was the *ethos*,²⁹ the official status of the speaker that counted. For example, the various parties did not have equal space in the newspapers. People listened to Nakasone and the Ministry of Education because the two had power in the reform. The Teachers' Union, the Socialist Party, and the Communist Party suggested six years of middle school education to eliminate the high school entrance examination. Had it been implemented, it would have cut the burden of students. Because of the budget issue and the ratio of public schools to private schools,³⁰ the Ministry of Education found it difficult to implement. However, no complaints came out about the fact that

²⁹ Aristotle divided persuasion (or rhetoric) into three components: the personal character of the speech (*ethos*), the audience who are put in a certain frame of mind (*pathos*), and the proof by the word of the speech itself (*logos*) (1991, Stacks., Hickson, & Hill, p.103).

³⁰ The number of public schools was not enough to accept all applicants for high school education, so the Ministry of Education must rely on private schools. Whenever the number of applicants exceeded overall capacity for high schools, the Ministry of Education asked private schools to expand their capacity to accept more applicants.

the Ministry turned down this plan. In fact, the Ministry turned down or postponed the plans that were proposed before this reform activity started. For example, the 6/3/3 system review was in the proposal of the Central Education Council in 1971. Although this plan was officially proposed, it somehow disappeared. Nobody bothered to ask for detailed explanations from the Ministry of Education as to why they turned it down. Therefore, the 6/3/3 school system reform plan came back in the educational reform debate in the 1980s again. The same pattern happened in Nakasone's reform.

Parents and the media paid attention to what Nakasone and the Ministry of Education said. They were at the center of the public debate. Theirs was the voice of the power; therefore, it was more credible. The voices from the minor groups were not heard. It was more the speakers rather than the message that the audiences, specifically the media, paid attention to. The reaction of media and people who were involved in the reform debate exposed the power structure among participants by paying attention to some and ignoring others. It showed the difficulty of implementing a reform from multiple perspectives. Fundamental issues remained unexplored in the media; for example, the importance of critical thinking in a more egalitarian, inclusive educational system. As a consequence, no political constituency or movement had a chance to develop around these issues.

University Entrance Examination System and the First Common

All national university applicants were to take two tests: the first common achievement test (共通一次試験) was the national test, and the second (二次試験) was the test offered by individual universities. These two tests operated as gatekeepers for entrance into a national university. The first common was offered by the national university test center all over Japan on the same day. The second test was offered at each university. A student chose a university to apply for the second test based on his/her score on the first common. In short, the first common indicated which university a student had a chance to enter.

The first common test was proposed in a report from the Central Education Council in 1971. It was supposed to solve the problem of irregular criteria in the national university entrance examination system. Before the first common was introduced, national universities offered tests with questions that high school students could not answer (Yomiuri News, February 28, 1985). They used these questions to "shake off" the number of applicants. Students, parents, and high school teachers complained. In 1977, the University Entrance Examination Center was established to respond to these complaints. In 1979, the test was introduced. The examination was to test student's basic achievement level obtained within their high school curriculum. Materials

outside of the curriculum were not allowed. The test consisted of five fields and seven subjects. The main five fields were Japanese language, mathematics, social education, science, and foreign language (English). The seven subjects were classified into three core subjects and four elective subjects. The three core subjects were Japanese, mathematics, and English. As for elective subjects, students were to choose two from contemporary social studies, Japanese history, world history, or geography and two from science, physics, biology, or chemistry.

Contrary to its original purpose, this system created a rigid ranking among national universities because of its percentile scoring system. The number of applicants to national universities decreased in the 1980s, because many applicants targeted private universities.³¹ The National University Association blamed their loss of students on the test system.

Some corporation executives or spokespersons criticized the university entrance examination system. The first common, they said, killed students' innovative thinking (思考力). Because the test used multiple choice questions only, students did not have to be innovative. What was tested was

³¹ Private universities also offered their own examinations. Also, the system and regulation were much more flexible for private universities than for national universities. For example, private universities could select the number of subjects for the test. It was possible for them to offer 3 subjects or employ essay tests and interviews. Private schools had a special authority and the Ministry of Education could not interfere. This was called "freedom of private school" (私立の自由).

memory. Young people who had gone through this system had a vast amount of knowledge (知識), but did not have skills to reason and to innovate (知恵). They were intelligent in terms of inputting and drawing data, but they could not find a problem on their own. "They can talk about a certain subject or theme; however, they can not make judgments when they face a bigger problem" (Ikeda, Yotsumoto, and Senda, 1996). The multiple test style of the first common provided a frame and students dealt with problems within the frame. It was the same task as in a factory assembly line. Somebody else created the line and specified the motion of the products and workers. They did not work and could not see outside the frame with their own eyes. They were, in Freire's words, "emotionally dependent" on the bigger power (1972, p.51). Corporations wanted to find innovative and self-motivated employees, and they were disappointed to find out that newly graduated employees did not have those skills.

What corporations claimed to be an innovative and self-motivated person was quite different from what Paulo Freire had in mind as a "critical" thinker. The kind of critical thinking suggested in Freire's work questions the structure, specifically the power structure, in business or society; however, this was not appreciated. What corporations sought was an "innovative" thinker. Innovation, from a corporate perspective, means bringing in new

types of products and new kinds of business to the corporation. An innovative person was a person who brought business profit, not a person who questioned the power structure. Being "self-motivated" from a corporate view again meant to do extra work beyond job requirements and work assigned by the boss. Self-motivation to find out problems in the system was not allowed. Corporate leaders wanted employees who were independent in doing required work. Definitions of these two words, "innovative" and "self-motivated," depended on who was speaking and to which audiences.

Ranking among universities caused another problem. Tokyo University stood at the top of the hierarchy. Other universities were ranked by the relative prestige which was determined by the difficulty of entrance standards. This ranking affected high school education as well. Prestigious high schools sent more of their students to the top ranking universities. Less prestigious were those that sent fewer or none. Lectures at high schools were based on university entrance examinations which required extensive memorization. High school students struggled to get into a prestigious university, because it affected their future. Transferring units between universities was difficult. Once a student entered a university, s/he stayed. Therefore, high school students focused on entrance examinations. University rank affected job prospects. If a student got into a prestigious university, s/he

would have more potential to get into governmental, national, or international corporations and s/he would also have a better chance at promotion.

Responding to criticism of the National University Association, corporate leaders, parents, and teachers, Nakasone urged the repeal of the first common test. He wanted to give national universities more flexibility in selecting their students. He wanted to free universities from the rankings, so that each university could develop its own special profile to attract high school students voluntarily. Nakasone also requested universities to employ more flexible admission criteria, such as essays and volunteer work experiences.

Two observations can be made about Nakasone's request for repealing the first common. First, he said he wanted to respond to the needs of students: he wanted to reduce the burden on students. Second, he wanted to repeal the first common because business people did not like it. Business people complained that multiple choice tests kill innovative thinking. Business requires more innovative and self-motivated people.³² Nakasone also responded to the needs of people in business.

³² In the post World War II period, the goal of Japan was to catch up with the democracy and industries of western nations. For this goal, the style of education and instruction produced an appropriate labor. However, corporate leaders considered that Japan already had caught up with the other advanced nations (and thus might need more creative people to lead other nations in the future.)

Nakasone wanted universities, like the high schools, to offer a test that would evaluate multiple aspects of applicants. For example, he asked the National University Association and the Ministry of Education to examine the personal side of a student such as community service experience. In this category, Nakasone emphasized promotion of volunteer work and group activities.³³ School students did not have time to do community work outside of the school setting because they had to study for examinations. They did not meet people who had different lives. Students were grouped according to age (grades); they did not meet people from other generations. Because of the examinations, parents and teachers did not value the social activities of students, and viewed those activities as a barrier to success.

When critics complained that "today's school students do not care about others," and that "today's school students value material³⁴ more than mind," they did not see the system. The job of the students was to do well at school and to pass examinations. Nothing was more important in life than passing examinations. That was what they learned not only at school, but in most cases at home as well.

³³ This was his fourth proposal in a 7-point proposal. Students' character could be formed by volunteer work and group activities.

³⁴ This meant today's students are materialistic.

Nakasone wanted schools to promote volunteer work and group activities. This would help to make young people more considerate about others. Helping old people or handicapped people would make them think about others. Nakasone thought the "mind was more important than an achievement level at school." Nakasone even suggested that schools take an experience of volunteer work into consideration when they select a student.

Again, this proposal includes "character." An article in Yomiuri News, September 5, 1984 introduced a student who was preparing for a university entrance examination. He complained: "Nakasone said 'character' should be taken into account. If 'character' is taken into account in the exam, we won't know what this admission criterion is about and it will become more difficult to prepare for the test." Again, it became obvious that changing test styles could not appease dissatisfaction.

In these plans, Nakasone was the speaker. His audiences were the general public, high schools, national universities, and business organizations. His message was (1) "introduce the character of a student as an admission criterion of universities," and (2) "eliminate the first common test." He ignored students who were influenced by and worried about the new admission standard for the university entrance examination. He said he wanted reform from the students' perspectives, but he did not ask for their

opinions. He talked about changing the system, but he did not challenge the blind worship of prestigious schools.

The contradiction reveals itself in the fact that Nakasone talked with private business people regarding employment style and urged them to hire students who did not graduate from prestigious colleges (Yomiuri News, January 6, 1984). However, the biggest and most powerful employer in Japan was the central government. He did not pressure the ministries and other top people in the government on this matter, and Tokyo University sent many graduates into the government. The school ranking system assumes a pyramid shape, which is reproduced in government and business. As long as Japan keeps this pyramid, nothing will work in high school and university reform (Nishio, 1994). Nakasone never publicly identified the link between elite schools and prestigious jobs as an obstacle of reform.

Moral Education and Cultivation of Sentiments

Before Nakasone proposed promotion of moral education, it had already been proposed by the Ministry of Education in 1976 and implemented in 1981. This reform was called "Yutori no Kyoiku" (やとり の 教育) (relaxed education). Some class hours were cut to promote moral education. For example, in junior high school, English classes had been offered for four hours a week. They were cut down to three hours per week and moral

education was implemented in the extra hour instead³⁵ (Yomiuri News, February 6, 1982, Yomiuri News, February 26, 1982).

The material of moral education in relaxed education was totally entrusted to the school. The Ministry of Education and the local school boards gave only simple guidelines so that schools could freely work on this program by themselves (Kato, T., January 5, 1982). Although schools had to make a decision, they did not know what to do. Some schools offered supplementary classes to prepare for exams (Yomiuri News, February 12, 1982). Some schools planned sports activities. The Ministry of Education investigated how schools handled moral education. It found that 28% of primary schools and 21% of junior high schools had no plan for moral education. Moral education was supposed to be offered 35 hours per year, and one hour per week. However, 48.6% of primary schools and 75.3% of junior high schools enforced fewer

³⁵ The school term was cut from 36 school weeks to 35 school weeks (Yomiuri News, May 7, 1982). The amount of material was not cut. This created more problems because schools had to satisfy the same amount of material in less time. For example, the standard vocabulary for junior high school English text books in the first and the second grade was 350 ~ 400. This did not change. Only the third-grade text books cut its number from 350-400 to 300-350 (Yomiuri News, February 26, 1982). School teachers complained that they became busier than before because of this project and no teachers believed this project would help the school problem (Asahi News, February 2, 1982). Schools and school boards always relied on the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education claimed that schools and school boards do nothing (Yomiuri News, September 5, 1984). After implementing this project, the Ministry of Education took a survey of junior high school students and found out that 40% of students in Japan went to cram school or had a private tutor to keep up with their classes (Asahi News, March 7, 1982).

than 34 hours per year for moral education. Thirty-one and one-tenth percent of primary school and 37.9% of junior high school teachers did not understand the meaning of moral education (Yomiuri News, August 6, 1983). The moral education plan did not work because school administrations lacked creativity (Yomiuri News, November 16, 1983). Schools had always concentrated on quantity rather than quality of materials; if they did not have guidelines, they didn't know what to do.³⁶ The definition of moral education was too broad for them.

Nakasone pointed out the corruption of family ties in response to school violence and juvenile delinquency. He believed that moral education would help to solve these problems. Here he emphasized linking a family, a school, and a community by promoting activities of community groups such as Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, women's organizations, and the PTA. He believed that by cooperation of people in the community, students could learn the common sense of daily life. Nakasone also emphasized that Confucianism and the moral laws of Buddhism should be introduced into moral education. Nakasone had a picture of moral education: inventing a class or a subject to teach humanity via Confucian and Buddhist dogma.

³⁶ Schools always complained that the Ministry of Education controls the school system too much.

Since the previous moral education project did not bear positive results, or at least schools were not satisfied,³⁷ Nakasone reintroduced moral education in his 7-point plans with a guideline--Confucianism and the moral laws of Buddhism. Nakasone used a syllogism that stated: 1) 6/3/3 system was introduced by the U.S.A. which was an individual oriented country where the people had a Christian background, 2) Japan had its own tradition of collectivistic Confucianism and Buddhism, 3) therefore, the 6/3/3 system did not suit Japan. Japan had a long-term tradition of Confucianism and Buddhism; however, they now were not seen as important as they were before World War II. Japan introduced the 6/3/3 school system with an individualistic oriented view after the war, and because it was not suited to Japan, it was alienating students (Yomiuri News, December 5, 1983).

Confucianism was introduced in Japan through Korea during the third century. Buddhism was introduced in Japan in the sixth century (Bukkyou Kyokai, 1983). Since then, they have changed their features along with new movements of thought in China and social change in Japan. Specifically, during the Tokugawa Shogunate, various schools of Confucianism flowered

³⁷ The Education Minister Mori himself admitted that Yotorino Kyoiku (relaxed education) was not successful. When this was implemented Mori was not the Education Minister, however, he had cooperated in this effort as a member of the LDP's Education Interest Faction. Mori did not mean his own ministry had made a mistake, but he wanted to emphasize that the Ministry needed to do something more than deal with the system (Yomiuri News, October 21, 1984).

and Confucian scholars worked for the Tokugawa administration and regional domain as official counselors. After winning in the civil war in 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu accepted the position of the shogun from the emperor and opened up the Tokugawa Administration. He believed that war and politics were two different things, so he showed interest in Confucianism because Confucianism introduced "the Way" to live as a leader of a nation. Confucian scholars were invited by the Tokugawa administration to advise successive shoguns.

Influenced by the shoguns, regional clans also sought the advice of Confucian scholars about the correct way to govern the people. Between the period from the opening of Tokugawa Administration by Tokugawa Ieyasu (1603) to the retirement of the eighth shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune (1744), various schools of thought flowered. Most of them were Neo-Confucian, which was conservative Confucianism. Their policy was to maintain the social order. The fifth Shogun, Tokugawa Tsunayoshi, promoted Confucianism, and also opened up a school in 1690. This school later became the official school of the Tokugawa administration (1797). During the Tokugawa shogunate, Confucianism, although people of various status were allowed to study, was for the upper class to govern the people in the existing class system.

In the Meiji era, when the Meiji emperor was asked his opinion about public education, he pointed out the importance of moral education in public education and requested appropriate materials to teach school students, specifically at the lower levels. He said, "The important point of education is clarify the body (体) and the goal (志). If these two are clear, people can define the purpose (why they should work hard). If the goal of the people is defined, the nation can be stable. It is important, specifically, in early childhood [to learn morality]"(Bukkyou Kyokai, 1983, p. 150). He meant that since little children did not know the goal of education, if they were forced into rote training, they would lose humanity and morality, because they would learn that knowledge was more important than morality. If they did so, they would not have any ethic to gain what they wanted (p.154).

To teach morality and humanity to students was important. However, teaching morality without restructuring the conventional teacher-student relationship would not help to solve the problem. Nakasone did not talk about this relationship, and he did not talk about dialectical instruction allowing students to voice their opinions. This was missing in his proposal. An article in Yomiuri News on October 30, 1983 criticized the assumption that students should be forced to obey the orders of adults, in return for which adults would take care of them for everything. In the article, adults complained that today's

children were indifferent, unmotivated. The article made the point that if children were forced to obey adults for everything, of course they became indifferent. They developed different faces at home, at school, and at cram school. What was most important was to change the form of instruction from the one in which adults taught things for students to one in which students learned things by themselves (Yomiuri News, October 30, 1983). If schools were kept in a condition where students who had troubles could not stay because nobody opened his/her ears to them, no moral education could work.

In this plan, the speaker was Nakasone. His message was "emphasis on moral education in school education and introducing Confucianism and the moral laws of Buddhism in moral education." His audience was the Ministry of Education which originally planned moral education for the school curriculum. The void lay in an emphasis on mutual understanding and trust between teachers and students. The teacher-student relationship was never discussed.

Paulo Freire pointed out the importance of this relationship. The conventional teacher-student relationship, he argued, was narrative in nature. "This relationship involves a narrating subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students) (Freire, 1979, p. 57).

His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration, contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the

totality that engendered them and could give them significance. (p. 57)

This is the same as the "banking" concept of education, mentioned in the earlier chapter.

Unless the narrative character or banking concept of instruction (from a teacher to students) is challenged, evaluation in moral education is done in the same way as in a mathematics class or English class: judgment by the amount of knowledge.³⁸

The audience Nakasone ignored was students. This plan didn't ask the views of students about moral education. What passed for moral education in this plan did not allow students to find a problem on their own or to engage in conversations with their teachers.

Educational Adaptations to People Who Travel and Work Internationally

Three main problems are addressed in this section: the English language skills of students, the capacity to accept foreign students, and the acceptance of returning students from abroad. The low achievement of Japanese students in communicating in English was pointed out by many in society. People who have gone through the postwar education system have studied English for at least three years in junior high school and three years in high school if they

³⁸ The Ministry of Education implemented a moral test in a multiple choice style (Mikami, M., 1995).

have gone to high school. However, criticism about Japanese students' poor communication skills in English came from inside and outside the country. The problem was that students studied English to pass tests, not to communicate (Yomiuri News, December 1, 1984; Yomiuri News, April 11, 1985). They spent so much effort and time studying English, but it did not help them much when it came to live communication. An article in Yomiuri News on March 13, 1982, objected to useless and difficult materials and school textbooks. It referred to an English textbook used for the first grade of junior high school. A chapter in the textbook contained a conversation between a boy and a girl. A little boy asked a little girl, "Are you a cowboy?" The girl answers, "No, I am a cowgirl." The article criticized such conversations for not being live communication. They did not help with the spontaneous use of English in writing or conversation.

Second, Japan's schools did not have enough capacity to accept foreign students compared with that of other nations. Schools did not have sufficient budget to offer supplementary Japanese language instruction for foreign students. There were not many Japanese language schools for foreign students, either. Yet to make Japanese students aware that they were a part of the world, they had to meet people from foreign countries. Also, if more students came from foreign countries, Japanese students' ability in English

might be improved. They would be able to get used to communicating with people from other cultures or people who did not share native languages. Nakasone pointed out that if these abilities were not improved, Japan, especially its young people, would be isolated from the world. Nakasone's Round Table Discussion Group explained that Japan accepts foreign students much less than other nations, and it proposed a plan to accept 100,000 foreign students per year. And the Ministry of Education planned to implement the following: 1) providing information about Japan to students who want to come to Japan; (2) referring recommendation and no exam for exchange students; (3) using other types of test styles for foreign students (not the first common); (4) reviewing the Japanese language curriculum; and (5) establishing accommodation for foreign students. They also planned to discuss with the Japanese International Corporation hiring students who had studied in Japan (Yomiuri News, September 1, 1983).³⁹

When Nakasone requested universities to accept more foreign students, he also suggested that the Ministry of Education promote exchange student programs. Establishment of international universities was proposed as well.

³⁹ In 1982, the Japanese government accepted 8116; the U.S.A. government accepted 310,000; the French government accepted 109,000. As for the ratio of foreign students of personal-expense per students of national expense, Japan accepted 3.6 students; U.S.A. accepted 42 students; England accepted 21 students. The reason for this low ratio in Japan was 1) high living expense, 2) difficulty in finding accommodation or apartments, 3) cultural block of society in Japan (Yomiuri News, September 1, 1983).

Its ratio of students was to be 33 percent each among Japanese students, returning students, and foreign students. Establishment of Japanese language schools for foreign students and supplying teachers to the schools were also taken into account.

Third, returning students had a disadvantage in the examination system. Students in Japan could prepare for the entrance examination through the school curriculum. Returning students, however, could not. If they went to local public schools in foreign countries, they must have studied a different curriculum from Japan's. They also had to study for the entrance examination for Japanese universities. They had to study an extra amount. Also, as for employment, returning students had a difficult time because the companies thought they would have a different mentality and would disturb the atmosphere of the company.

Nakasone requested that schools, especially universities, offer more space for students returning from abroad by offering a special test focusing on their bilingual skills. For example, they could take a test which had an emphasis on English communication skills. Also, he asked universities to offer classes in English, so that those returning students could keep up (Yomiuri News, December 1, 1983).

The problem regarding returning students was also a corporate concern. When employees had to move to foreign countries on business for long terms, the first thing they would worry about was their children's education. They could not take their children with them because of the school, some fathers had to move to the location by themselves. Even when employees went with their families, they needed to send their children to a Japanese school, instead of to the local schools. Nakasone emphasized the reform from multiple perspectives. This provision was based on people in power. People in power could easily reach Nakasone. The reason this plan came out in the first stage was that Nakasone listened to them.

As for English skills, business people found that their employees had difficulty communicating in English on business occasions. Accepting more foreign students was necessary because a number of foreign students wanted to study in Japan, but they did not have enough capacity for these students. Establishing international schools was one of the solutions. However, considering students who grew up in Japan, students who could afford to go to English conversation school might have an advantage in getting into schools and in receiving more appreciation for their bilingual skills. This plan did not have any relation to students who could not afford to go to English

conversation school or to receive special education about foreign countries.

It was for children of powerful people.

In this plan, the speaker was Nakasone. His message was to promote communication-oriented English instruction, accepting more foreign students, saving returning students. His audience was business groups, the Ministry of Education, universities, and foreign students. To promote communication-oriented English instruction would save many students who suffered in memorization-oriented instruction. Also, it would improve the students' communication skills in English. Offering more seats for foreign students would help international students who wanted to attend school in Japan.

Teachers' Retooling Program and Inviting Professionals to School as Teachers

Public school teachers were hired as public service officials. They had to take a test for licensing. Four-year college students were required to take 44-54 units in order to earn the first degree teaching license for kindergarten, primary school and junior high school and the second degree teaching license for high school instruction. Two-year college students were required to take 26-30 units to receive the second degree teaching license for kindergarten, primary school, and junior high school instruction. Master program students could take the first degree license for high school instruction from

undergraduate units and 12 units in the Master program (Yomiuri News, July 15, 1983). Teachers' responsibilities varied and depended on which level they taught; however, the ranking of their license did not make any difference among them, except for promotion to school management.

Parents and the media, when school violence and juvenile delinquency became major issues (Yomiuri News, June 6, 1982), focused on the quality of the teachers. The LDP Education Faction complained that compensation of teachers had improved, but the quality of teachers had not (Yomiuri News, July 15, 1983). Parents, the media, and even students blamed teachers for not handling school violence, juvenile delinquency, and school bullying.⁴⁰ They could not deal with the real problems, but they tried to manage them by controlling students. Japanese junior high schools and high schools had tight school regulations regarding students' hair style, uniform, socks, and shoes.⁴¹ The Teachers' Union often complained that the social system controlled school

⁴⁰ When Nakasone's Round Table Discussion Group invited public comments on educational issues, they received 2334 letters. Among them, 266 letters complained about the quality of school teachers (Yomiuri News, March 5, 1984). In the Yomiuri News survey, conducted on March 12, 1984, 32.3% of people who responded to the survey showed dissatisfaction with school teachers.

⁴¹ In the meeting of the Teachers' Union, a criticism came out toward school teachers that they were not sensitive to school bullying, but were sensitive about students' uniform, hair style, school laws, that they always blamed the strict control over teachers and trying to get out of their responsibilities. Regarding the National flag and the National anthem, some of the members of the Union could not answer exactly why the Teachers' Union opposed to them. There was not sufficient trust between parents and teachers (Yomiuri News, January 23, 1986).

teachers too much; however, teachers did to students what had been done to them.⁴²

The school system had created teachers who not only did everything they were told, but also did only what they were told. It was called, in Japanese, demo-shika zoku (everything-but only group) (Yomiuri News, November 8, 1983). The LDP, the media, and parents claimed that the system was not effective in producing good teachers. Also, it was easy to take units in universities for teaching so that a student who was not motivated to be a teacher could easily pass the class.

The LDP Education Interest Faction⁴³ and the Ministry of Education originally suggested three main plans: six years of internship for teachers, an increase in units at colleges required for teaching, and longer terms of teaching assistantships. Six years of internship was the long-term earnest

⁴² Criticism of teachers may also have resulted from the Teacher Union's activities such as strikes. Nakasone himself criticized the Teachers' Union for being too political. He thought the Teachers' Union should handle school issues, not political issues. A member of Nakasone's Round Table Discussion Group, Ayako Sono, also criticized the Teachers' Union's strike. She said, "Students are human. Teachers are not producing material, but educating humans. They try to claim their rights as labor and cause strikes. How can children pay them respect?" (Yomiuri News, March 27, 1984).

⁴³ The LDP Education Faction by itself suggested : (1) a two-year college degree and one more year for teaching units, or only four year degree plus 1-2 years for teaching; (2) a higher license for a Masters or Ph.D person; (3) a time limit for a paper teacher, license renewal system with training or seminar; (4) license canceling for paper teachers; (5) a internship; (6) an adviser system for new teachers (Yomiuri News, January 30, 1983).

wish of LDP Education Interest Faction and the Ministry of Education. They had been trying to implement this; however, it was difficult for them, because the Teachers Union vigorously opposed this plan. LDP Education Interest Faction and the Ministry of Education claimed that teaching was such an important profession that its licensing should be more difficult and qualification standards should be higher. For example, a medical student was required to have six years of internship. This profession was important because a doctor handled the life of a patient. The same logic was used for a teacher (Yomiuri News, November 23, 1983). A teacher was important because s/he handled the future of a student. Teachers should not be able to earn a license so easily.

There was a number of so-called "paper teachers."⁴⁴ A "paper teacher" had a teaching license, but did not teach at school. S/he worked in a different profession and just kept the license. These people caused problems at college. For example, a four year college student who wanted to be a teacher was required to assist for four weeks at either a kindergarten or primary school or two weeks at junior high school or high school. Because of the number of students applying for teaching assistantships, schools had to secure places

⁴⁴ Every year, approximately 170,000 students used to obtain a teaching license; however, only 40,000 students actually became school teachers (Yomiuri News, June 15, 1983).

where the college students could work. Both a sender of students (colleges) and their receiver (schools) must work hard to make positions for student teachers. Also, they had to spend time to train these students. However, the number of students who actually became teachers was much fewer than the number of students who gained a teacher's license.

The Ministry of Education considered that a more difficult licensing policy might help to decrease the number of "paper teachers" and to offer a better teaching experience for students who wanted to become teachers. The plan was to offer a longer term of teaching assistantships.⁴⁵ It proposed eight weeks of teaching assistantship at kindergarten or primary school, or six weeks at junior high school or high school. Of the six weeks of junior high school or high school teaching assistantship, two weeks could be volunteer work or special studies (Yomiuri News, July 15, 1983). The Ministry of Education also suggested that the number of units for teacher licensing at colleges be increased from 44-54 to 66-70 units at four year colleges and from 26-30 to 38-40 units at two year colleges. Masters students should take 70 units at the undergraduate level and then 24 more units in the Masters program (Yomiuri News, November 23, 1983). This would also help to cut down the

⁴⁵ It also proposed the term limit of teaching license for "paper teachers" and introducing a license renewal system (Yomiuri News, May 17, 1982). Nakasone spoke of these plans in a press interview (Yomiuri News, December 7, 1983).

number of "paper teachers." It also suggested three rankings of school teachers by their degree level: upper, intermediate, and lower (Yomiuri News, November 23, 1983).⁴⁶

The Teachers' Union vigorously opposed these plans arguing that it would create ranking among teachers and the ranking among teachers would prevent them from cooperating with each other (Yomiuri News, June 15, 1983; Yomiuri News, November 23, 1983; and Yomiuri News, March 27, 1984). A junior high school teacher complained that parents might look down at low ranked teachers and it would become more difficult to establish trust between teacher and parents (Yomiuri News, November 23, 1983). It also claimed that the plan gave more control to the Ministry of Education over teachers (Yomiuri News, March 27, 1984). The Teachers' Union suspected the Ministry of Education and the LDP Faction of trying to oppress the Teachers' Union and take away its power. The Teachers' Union claimed, instead, that the Ministry of Education should give better compensation to teachers making teaching a more attractive profession. The Teachers' Union claimed that the job description of a teacher was too difficult and the compensation was too little. A number of students who had the ability to become skilled teachers went into

⁴⁶ These plans by the Ministry of Education were withdrawn temporarily because the Ministry needed to get consent from other political groups for the Provisional Education Reform Council (Yomiuri News, May 29, 1984).

business. It also proposed fewer than 40 students per a class (Yomiuri News, April 8, 1984; Yomiuri News, April 14, 1984).⁴⁷ If a teacher had fewer students to take care of, it would be easier for a teacher to watch each individual student. The Teachers' Union requested a budget increase to hire more new teachers (Yomiuri, October 2, 1984).⁴⁸ In this plan, the conflict between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Union became clear.

The Ministry of Education and the LDP Education Interest Faction, as speakers, proposed stricter teacher licensing. The message was to "create a stricter teacher licensing system to improve the quality of school teachers." Their audience included parents, Nakasone, and the general public. The ignored audiences were school teachers and the Teachers' Union. The plan did not talk about the job description of teachers. The reason teachers' job description was so hard was that it had two conflicting goals: get students to pass exams and take care of students' personal needs. Because of the weight of examinations, teachers needed to concentrate on examination-oriented instruction. The Teachers' Union complained that teachers had no time to take

⁴⁷ The Communist Party and the Ministry of Education also suggested 40 students per class in a 5 year plan (Yomiuri News, February 24, 1984, Yomiuri News, April 14, 1984).

⁴⁸ Another request by the Teachers' Union was for earlier notification of employment for school teachers (Yomiuri News, June 1, 1982). Students who passed licensing were informed in November. However, most private corporations sent employment notices earlier than that. The Teachers' Union claimed that this was one of the reasons that schools could not secure talented teachers. This plan was also discussed by the Ministry of Education.

care of students' personal side. Criticism targeted this side of their job description, focusing on juvenile delinquency and school bullying, but the proposals did not clarify the job description of teachers or their role in working with students beyond preparing them for examinations.

As for increasing compensation for teachers, the speaker was the Teachers' Union. Its message was "offer better compensation to attract college students to the teaching profession," and "reduce class size to fewer than 40 students." The audiences were school teachers, the Ministry of Education, and the general public. In this proposal, the speaker did not talk about rigid school laws and the physical punishment⁴⁹ of students which were a source of criticism. The Teachers' Union proposed the plan for profiting teachers, not students. The Teachers' Union tried to keep the teachers' right to impose their authority over students by sending data to students' deposit box. They also did not talk about improving the instructional style enabling them to work with students, beyond the conventional "banking" relationship. Nobody talked about the relationship of teachers and students as it was discussed by Paulo Freire. This was the missing part in the plan. Students were not part of the audience.

⁴⁹ The Teachers' Union later discussed eliminating physical punishment in school education in its proposals (Yomiuri News, December 3, 1985).

In these plans, neither the Ministry of Education nor the Teachers' Union talked about the teacher-student relationship. Teachers are successful products of the examination system. An article in Yomiuri News, November 8, 1983, introduced a college student who had failed the teacher licensing examination. She had good qualifications as a teacher and even the primary school where she had a teaching assistantship wanted her to come to teach. But she failed the examination. The test was multiple choice and stressed memorization skills. When the student took the test, 3147 students also took this test for only 200 positions. To pass, students had to find out the pattern and the important points of the questions and memorize materials based on the predictions (Yomiuri News, November 8, 1983). This was an extension of the entrance examination.

The article raised the question: how could this examination system find talented teachers? Paulo Freire discussed the risk of patterned instruction that would be preserved from generation to generation.

Internalizing paternal authority through the rigid relationship structure emphasized by the school, these young people tend when they become professionals (because of the very fear of freedom instilled by these relationships) to repeat the rigid patterns in which they were miseducated. This phenomenon, in addition to their class position, perhaps explains why so many professionals adhere to anti-dialogical action. Whatever the specialty that brings them into contact with the people, they are almost unshakably convinced that it is their mission to "give" the latter their knowledge and techniques. (p. 153)

The Ministry of Education wanted to increase requirements for getting a teaching license. They assumed that successful products of the examination system could be ideal teachers. Yet how could these successful products understand the feeling of students who could not keep up with the class? These teachers succeeded in so-called "cramming lectures or bullet train lectures," in which the speed of delivery was more important than the content of the lecture. Where could they learn how to discuss with students? In this reform plan, the Ministry ignored the test system for obtaining a teaching license⁵⁰ and the lecture style which school teachers had gone through as students, and the Ministry and the Union just talked about changing the superficial system. Students were ignored entirely.

Members of the Provisional Education Reform Council

In this section, the selection of the council members is discussed. The content of its debate was similar to the first part of this chapter; therefore, it is excluded from this section, and the outline of their discussion is shown in the appendix instead.

Selecting members of the council was the most important issue for political camps, because the members recommended by a political camp might reflect the opinion of the group. It would directly influence the reform. According

⁵⁰ The Ministry of Education vaguely proposed a reform of the teaching license test; however, this did not come out at the first stage of its proposal.

to close associates of Nakasone, the success of this reform would depend on how much they could drive away the Ministry of Education and people in the education field. For Nakasone's side, the Ministry of Education seemed to be too conservative to promote a major reform. So they thought that people from the business field might be able to bring innovative plans into the reform. The members of the council were very important for the other political camps because the council had a special power under the direct control of the Prime Minister. The Provisional Education Reform Council under the Prime Minister meant that the Prime Minister entrusted all his power to it for the issue. He backed them up. The council could change what the ministries could not. It could implement the reform without any intervention from other political groups. This was the reason Nakasone wanted to establish the council and other political parties did not want him to do that. The bill for the Provisional Education Reform Council was passed in the Diet. If the Provisional Education Council were to be established, political camps wanted their opinions to be reflected in it. So they claimed several conditions.

Original Promise

The number of members for the Provisional Education Reform Council was originally planned as 16 to 17 persons, and its term was for three to four

years.⁵¹ Nakasone was to appoint a chairman, and the Ministry of Education was to appoint most of its members.

The Voice of Nakasone

Originally Nakasone himself did not plan to establish the P.E.R.C.. He asked the Ministry of Education if the Central Education Council could be temporarily entrusted to himself. The answer from the Ministry of Education was negative. It was impossible under the law. The chairman of the Social Democratic Party suggested that Nakasone establish his own council.

Nakasone had an image for a chairman of the council as a person who (1) had own purpose and belief in education, (2) had moral and ethical understandings, (3) had an international view, and (4) could organize about 25 people. Nakasone wanted a chairman from a business field. He explained that if we were to expect major reforms, people inside the field would not be able to succeed, because they would be too conservative to change the entire system. People from outside the field would have a more flexible way of thinking about the system.

He also said, "People in the education field caused the problems that we have right now. They should not touch the reform because they might make the same mistake again." A close associate of Nakasone said, "The success of

⁵¹ The LDP insisted on two years.

this reform depends on how much they can drive away the Ministry of Education and people in the Education field."

For Nakasone, the Ministry of Education and the LDP Education Faction were void characters in the reform. Nakasone wanted to use the same strategies that he employed in the administrative reform, which was done using business perspectives. His designated target characters were business people.

The Voices of the Ministry of Education and the Education Interest Faction

Initially the LDP Education faction criticized Nakasone's Provisional Education Reform Council saying it would distort the neutrality of education. However, they realized that if their opinions were reflected in the council, it would be useful for them. The Ministry of Education and the LDP Education Faction wanted the P.E.R.C. members from the education field and to drive away people from the business field because people in the business field might cause confusion in the education system. The Ministry of Education and Education Faction assumed people in the business field did not know anything about education. Also, the two camps were afraid that business people would bring a "capitalist spirit of the business field" into the educational field. Business and education were two different things, and the capitalist spirit was not suitable to education, they argued.

When the two groups found out Nakasone wanted the chairman of the P.E.R.C. from the business field, they were strongly opposed. If the chairman was from business, they warned that reform would be done for business and administrative purposes. They requested a chairman from the educational field. At this point, Nakasone's conflict with the Ministry of the Education and the Education Interest Faction became public.

After negotiation, the participants made a deal. The Ministry of Education would appoint a chairman of the P.E.R.C., and Nakasone would appoint most of the members. Both sides compromised. They increased the number of members to 25 people because both sides wanted to get a balanced selection, but no one was satisfied in selecting the members.

The Yomiuri News on August 23, 1984 criticized the P.E.R.C. members asking how teamwork could be expected in this group if people who chose them were not satisfied with them. As an example, Yomiuri News described the difference of opinions among three heads of P.E.R.C. over the budget issue. Sub-Chairman Ishikawa who was from the education field said, "Education takes money. We should not be afraid of spending money on it." Another Sub-Chairman, Nakayama, who was chairman of a banking corporation, said, "We (as business persons) always calculate money. I will calculate money in this reform too."

Chairman Okamoto who was from the education field said, "I have not even thought of that yet." How could these three persons organize 25 members?

The Voice of the Teachers' Union

Nakasone planned to have the reform from multiple perspectives, and the Teachers' Union was invited to join the council. However, the Teachers' Union did not officially send any members.⁵² The Teachers' Union was against Nakasone's reform. They planned to go on strike if Nakasone insisted on the reforms proposed by his own council. However, a strike did not occur, because if they went on strike, they would lose public support. At the moment when the public was suffering from school problems, striking would mean that the Union was rejecting cooperation in solving the problems.

The Teachers' Union believed that their opinions were the voice of the general public, including parents and students. However, Nakasone enjoyed public support at this point for reform. School teachers, on the other hand, were being criticized by the public, so they could not oppose Nakasone. Instead, the Teachers Union organized its own education reform council. At first, it suggested that the Ministry of Education establish its council. The Ministry did not respond. The Union decided to organize its own council.

⁵² One of its members joined the council voluntarily, but she was not sent by the Teachers' Union.

When Nakasone and the Ministry invited the Teachers' Union to the education reform council, the Union implied that it might send its members under certain conditions, such as holding open-door meetings of the P.E.R.C. Eventually, the Union did not send delegates. It refused to do it because, if it had done so, Nakasone would have succeeded in organizing educational reform that everyone participated in. Nakasone could take credit for inviting people whose opinions might not be reflected in the conclusions. The Teachers' Union reasoned that since the Union was the representative of the general public, if it did not cooperate with Nakasone, Nakasone would not get full support from the general public. One justification of non-participation offered by the Teachers' Union was that the council was a tool to implement militaristic education in Japan. Not many people understood this kind of logic, and the Union then was the one that lost public support.⁵³ Another justification was that members of the P.E.R.C. consisted of people from Nakasone's circle. The result was obvious: the Union (and the public) could not expect anything of value in this council.

The Voice of the Social Democratic Party

Initially the chairman of the SDP suggested that Nakasone establish a council under his own control, so the SDP was willing to cooperate. The only

⁵³ Dissatisfaction toward school teachers was often demonstrated by the society.

condition was that Nakasone keep politics out of education. The SDP also urged that (1) members should be appointed by the Diet, and (2) the council should report the results of the discussion to the Diet. Their stipulation reflected the views of the minor political camps in the SDP interested in Education. Given its political position, it could not fully support the LDP group, but the SDP was generally satisfied with the members of the P.E.R.C.

The Voice of the Clean Political Party

The Clean Political Party initially disagreed with the establishment of the Provisional Education Reform Council because the Ministry of Education, the Central Education Council, and the Education Interest factions already existed. There was no need for establishing another group. However, they eventually agreed to it with conditions: (1) discussion should be open-door discussion to the public; (2) members should be appointed by consensus of the Diet; and (3) parents, teachers, and representatives of communities should be invited to the council. Also, the Clean Political Party opposed the plan of stricter teacher licensing. The Ministry of Education and the Education Faction temporarily withdrew this provision to get support from the Clean Political Party.

The Voices of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party

The Communist Party criticized the P.E.R.C. claiming that it might ruin democratic education of the postwar period. The Socialist Party, however,

pointed out the necessity of educational reform. The Socialist Party claimed that the LDP and the government were causing the problems. According to them, the general public such as parents and teachers should take the initiative. It also criticized the P.E.R.C. as a political invasion of education. The Socialist Party claimed that the reform should be taken care of by the Central Education Council, not by the new council. At the same time, they also claimed that the new council should be appointed by the consensus of the Diet. In the end, the Socialist Party was willing to discuss the issues with the government.

Conclusion

Nakasone repeatedly claimed that he would implement reform from multiple perspectives, and he introduced opinions from various people. However, the way he interpreted their opinions was based on business and administrative perspectives. Although he visited schools to observe the current situation and to talk with teachers and students, the proposals which were presented by him had already been presented by many groups through the media. Those people whose voices could be heard were the people with the power. What Nakasone did was to organize the various opinions and people who participated in the debate.

As noted above, Nakasone's side believed that the result of the reform depended on how well they could keep the Ministry of Education and the

Education Interest Faction away from the council. He designated these two groups as a void character in the reform. Also, he invited the Teachers' Union to the council; however, he did not invite them to select members of the council. In this way, the Teachers' Union was designated a void character.

In the debate, Nakasone himself was at a loss as to where to start. He tried to solve existing problems; however, most of the plans had the potential to cause other problems. It was not the educational system; it was the social structure created during the Meiji era and the post war education reforms. That was the real source of the problems. Nakasone himself admitted that the overall social structure should be included in the reform. They discussed the centralized power structure of politics and the economy which indirectly created the pyramid of school ranking. The Curriculum proposed by the council even introduced more ways to produce favorable employees for corporate leaders. It was not to educate what Paulo Freire called critical thinkers.

The Ministry of Education also had a favorable audience and designated void characters. First, it did not want Nakasone to handle the issue. For the Ministry of Education, Nakasone was an uninvited audience. Also, people from the business field who were recommended by Nakasone were another group of an uninvited character. They wanted to keep power to handle the issues in education; therefore, they preferred opinions and people from the education

field. Specifically, university professors who were invited by the Ministry of Education were mostly from the prestigious colleges. Professors from the prestigious colleges worked to keep their status; therefore, their opinions would never break with the existing system which was profitable to them. This was the centralization of the system. Professors from middle or low ranked colleges were not invited. Even in the education field, some people were ignored. The Teachers' Union was not invited either.

The Teachers' Union, since it was organized, had been a long-term opponent of the Ministry of Education. It had been fighting against the Ministry of Education regarding several issues, such as compensation for teachers, peace education, the national flag, and the national song. A major group in the Teachers' Union was the Socialist Party, and a minor group was the Communist Party. The Teachers' Union claimed itself to be a labor representative. It also claimed that the voice of the Teachers' Union was the voice of the general public; therefore, it was against the system. For the Teachers' Union, the Ministry of Education, the Education Interest Faction, and Nakasone were uninvited audiences. Since it claimed the opinions from the Teachers' Union were the opinion of the people, its invited audiences were supposed to be teachers, students, and parents.

The number of its members was decreasing every year. Public opinion polls demonstrated dissatisfaction with teachers. The activity of the Teachers' Union did not reflect the wants of the general public. Although it proposed several plans, such as twelve years of compulsory education and six years of middle school, to reduce the entrance examination, and 40-students class size, it did not ask questions about the overall social structure which created ranking among schools, jobs, and people. The Teachers' Union did not ask itself how to educate critical thinkers. Whenever there was difficulty, the members of the Union blamed the system and the power structure. However, teachers also have power over students and parents in the classroom and in counseling. Teachers did not ask how to give up their power and cooperate with students and parents to work against another power.

The four major political camps in the reform did not work with each other, and all four did not talk about emancipation pedagogy as discussed by Paulo Freire. Each camp invited people who supported its policy and ignored people who did not bring profit to it. The reform plans might solve peripheral problems, but they would not solve the main frame issues. So long as the power structure existed as it was, competition focused at a particular place. The system might be adjusted, it seems, to save students at the bottom level, but this adjustment created what was called a glass shield. The system seemed to

offer an opportunity for every student. But if a student were not attending cram school, if a student's parents were not supportive of his/her education, the future of the student was limited. The status quo of power was maintained in the reform.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

School Problems

A rise in school violence and juvenile delinquency provoked the debate over the education system in Japan. Politicians, the media, and parents tried to find out the reason for school violence. They focused on the competitive nature of the education system, and especially on the entrance examination. Various political parties and general people's involvement in the debate created perspectives for gauging Nakasone's claims: the third major educational reform since the Meiji Restoration in the late 1800s. However, lack of clarification of the education problems and goals of education resulted in a shift in focus from juvenile delinquency to the power struggle among political parties. The target audiences of the debate were students; however, they were forgotten during the debate. Or at least, to work from the students' perspectives, Nakasone had to confront other political groups.

The Entrance Examination System

High competition in the entrance examination escalated along with the rise of the living standard of the general public. To go to a good college, one needed go to a good high school. To go to a good high school, one needed to work hard in junior high school. Preparation for the entrance examinations

needed to be started as early as possible. Most test questions could be answered by memorization of huge amounts of material. Students spent their time memorizing the content of text books and doing drills. Even national universities used multiple choice tests for their entrance examinations. Memorization was heavily criticized as it was said to stifle students' innovative thinking, to suppress individual talent, and to suffocate an interest in learning.

Classes in school were offered to maximize success in the memorization oriented tests; therefore, the class employed a lecture style, not a discussion style. The teachers pumped data into students' brains, but that did not help students to think critically or to speak in their own words. This was not seen as a problem in Japan because discussion did not help students to answer the questions on tests that required accuracy rather than understandings about the world and the lives of students.

To direct students for success with entrance examinations, the relative prestige (percentile) was used. Relative prestige indicated the overall ranking of students; that was, students were ranked by number in terms of the scores of trial tests. Heavy dependence on relative prestige caused another criticism which was that a student was not seen as a human, but as a number. Although it was heavily criticized, school, politicians, and parents did not know what to

do without it because the relative prestige was a useful measurement in predicting success on the entrance examination.

As a solution to the examination system, students and their parents discovered cram school. Students went to cram school after regular school hours or on weekends and practiced drills. This type of school helped students learn question patterns and strategies in order to memorize test material. After many school violence incidents came out and parents no longer trusted regular school, cram school became the salvation of the education system. Although parents complained about the fact that cram schools cost money, they sent their children to cram school because they had to.

Corporations also complained about the school system, especially because the memorization-oriented test system did not produce ideal workers and corporations needed to re-train new employees. Those corporations worked to support the school hierarchy and tried to assure better workers. The business styles were changing from trying to copy the Western business style to a new innovative style. Corporations needed employees who could invent a product or conduct business in Japan's own style in the future. This was the reason business people asked for reform.

Rhetorical Contextualization

In this study, rhetorical contextualization was employed as a theoretical framework. Rhetorical contextualization poses questions examining all aspects involved in discourse, including what is missing. It consists of two sets of questions. First, it asks about the speaker and his or her characteristics, audiences and their characteristics, and the message. Second, it asks about the speaker who is not present and his/her characteristics, the audience that is ignored in the message and its characteristics, and the message which is silenced or discounted. These not-present characteristics are called a "void." When these two sets of questions are asked systematically, the rhetorical situation is contextualized. This makes it easier for us to understand the purpose of the message, and gives us a way to find out alternative choices so that we can make a decision on our own.

Paulo Freire's Emancipation Pedagogy

Paulo Freire's emancipation pedagogy was used to reflect on the silenced (the void) character of the debate in this study. Paulo Freire focused on Brazilian illiterates, mostly peasants, as the powerless and oppressed. These peasants did not see themselves as human beings because they did not have knowledge about the world. They were framed as animals or things. Freire found that the conventional education style did not work to emancipate these

illiterate peasants from the social system which dehumanized and oppressed them. The existing power structure also permeated the conventional system: a teacher (the power who knows things) and students (the powerless who know nothing). As an alternative, Freire employed dialectical instruction in which teachers and students worked together to learn about each others' world. Since there was less hierarchy in this approach, this instruction made students conscious of the fact that they also knew something, that they could speak up, and that they were also human. When students realized that they had been dehumanized, that they were oppressed, they became critical and vocal. To make them critical participants in democracy was Freire's goal.

Invited Characters in the Debate

Three political groups were involved in the reform debate in Japan: Prime Minister Nakasone, the Ministry of Education, and the LDP Education Interest Faction. The Teachers' Union also participated; however, its involvement was not so much to pursue a solution to school problems as to avoid being left out. Other political parties also joined the debate to propose plans: the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Clean Political Party, and the Communist Party. These groups were also involved and tried not to be left out. All groups involved in the debate had specific purposes in their plans and designated audiences for their plans. The proposals they suggested, however,

ignored students. Initially, the debate started to save students who were suffering in a harsh school system. A common theme in the messages of all political groups was a need to promote "reform by students' perspectives." Plans suggested resulted in confusion and problems for students. This was so because these plans dealt with the system itself so that politicians could attract attention of people and the media. The plans forgot about the philosophy behind the system. Nobody discussed how to make students critically human. Not only the educational system, but also the social structure supporting the school hierarchy, needed discussing. School hierarchy dehumanized students. The school system did not allow students to become critical persons. Nobody talked about how to empower students as critical human beings.

Eliminating the relative prestige system which was dehumanizing students would not, by itself, humanize students. When one problem was eliminated, another would likely emerge soon after. The university test system was a good example. The national university common test was designed to solve troublesome problems of tests being offered by each university; however, it created another problem: more rigid ranking among universities. Unless students were liberated from the precise school hierarchy and the memorization-oriented lecture, any reform had the potential to cause another problem. The education system created an incapacity among Japanese,

including politicians. The successful products of the existing education system could not be expected to release students when their success and their status were based on scoring well on memorization-oriented examinations. They were trained not to ask questions about the system, but to accept the system as it was. Nakasone's accomplishment was that he led people to discuss the issue of the education system. He created an opportunity for some people to join the discussion, (although there were still many people including students and their parents who were left out). On this point, Nakasone succeeded in his plan no matter what the result was.

Criticisms for the Reform Debate

I have three criticisms of the process of debating educational reform in Japan. First, the debate should have disregarded the party lines of participants. Nakasone could have made the participants more representative. He said he would invite a wide variety of people. In fact, various people such as school teachers, students, parents, and business people did have a chance to speak about their problems in education. However, the opinions and suggestions from weaker political groups were left out, or they were not paid attention equally. People were invited to talk as representatives of certain groups, and their party lines always inhibited the cooperation of even people who had the same opinions. Had Nakasone included a broader range of groups

and more independent people, he might have discovered proposals which would have been more profitable to students. For example, there was disagreement within the Ministry of Education, in the Education Interest Faction, and in the Teachers' Union. If people from these groups who held similar opinions could have discussed the issues, they might have developed stronger proposals for successful reform.

Second, the Ministry of Education might have provided different routes for students to enter universities. This idea was discussed in the Provisional Education Reform Council. They did not explore this plan in detail. A major problem was that a university's ranking influenced the entrance examination and high school education. To counteract this, the Ministry could have established more schools with different purposes. It could, for example, have established two-year community colleges in each city as in the U.S. It could have provided budget for some experimental schools to hire excellent teachers and to allow four-year universities to set aside a certain number of openings for transfer students from two-year colleges. The Ministry could also have distributed some budget to two-year private colleges which would be willing to cooperate in this project. Further, when a student applied for transfer, a 4-year college could take GPA and recommendation letters into consideration as well as an examination.

Universities could also have employed a more flexible unit system. Most universities in Japan employed the unit system; however, the grade of 4 years was seen as more important. The grade system made it difficult for people who had jobs to attend school. Schools required their students to take a certain number of core courses per year without fail. Students could not plan their own schedules. If students who went to school and held a job at the same time (i.e. working students) were encouraged, transferring between schools could have become more popular and easier. Outstanding students could receive scholarships and go to prestigious schools even though they had high tuition fees. This plan would dissolve the strong belief that a one-time exam determines the future of students.

The population under 18 years old was decreasing every year. Universities and colleges had to compete to survive. The time in which they could "shake-off" extra applicants had already passed. They needed to come up with their own characteristics and target students to attract. Accepting the older generation, working students, and people who needed retraining may have been inevitable for them. To accept these people, they needed to introduce a more flexible unit system and offer several types of curriculum depending on students' needs.

Third, universities should have studied their own purposes of education and offered curriculum based on their purposes. If each university had a different goal, the standardized measurement to set up ranking among schools might not be useful anymore. Such study would have helped to release universities from competition based on entrance examinations. Universities could have competed with each other by their research, curriculum, philosophy, or even the scale of libraries. Competition in terms of the difficulty of entrance examinations did not help schools to improve their pedagogical goals.

Universities should have been more flexible in order to respond to the requests of the community. Universities had a specific reason not to let outsiders interfere with their system. Being the highest educational institution, they produce the powerful in society and try to support the system that will reproduce the hierarchy. The higher rank a school has, the less it opens its doors to the community. People of the nation are the owners of national universities; therefore, they should be able to speak their opinions and their opinions should be reflected in the reform.

It was also true that a school with a specific educational goal could attract business and industry. Business or industry located near the school to find potential workers. This was called "university front" in Japan. Business or

technology companies opened up offices in the town where there was a school with an unique curriculum. To specify the kind of people a school educates (e.g. career training) was one of the ways to survive. For that, the measurement it employed (entrance examination) was not appropriate, because the value of universities was to depend on the needs of society.

Fourth, prestigious national universities could have set up regional codes for applicants and accepted only a certain percentage of students from one area. This was advanced by Nishio in his book Education and Freedom (1992). A few high schools sent many of their graduates to Tokyo University, and this established their rank among high schools. Parents believed that if their children could enter a prestigious high school they had a better chance to enter Tokyo University. To counteract this, Nishio urged Tokyo University to set a number limit for each high school as Harvard University (U.S.A.) did. If a high school could send only two students to Tokyo University, other high schools would also have chances.

The number limit did not have to be set at two per school. Universities could have set the number by means of a percentage for each region. National universities could have set up a regional code for each city or prefecture and calculated the percentage based on its population. This would have helped each region to send high school graduates to prestigious universities. This

could have also helped the universities, because they could attract a broader cross section of students. Although the percentile ranking of a university might go down, a greater regional variety of people could profit a university as they would bring different ideas and experiences to the school. Students would have a chance to deal with different types of people. If a university accepted only a narrow cross section of people, students would not have as much opportunity to progress in their thinking. They would tend to agree with each other that they were the best and that their thinking was the best, with the result that they were isolated from the rest of society. The fields of industry and science in particular complained that Japan could not develop innovative products because of narrow thinking.

After I graduated from a four-year college in Japan, I came to the U.S. to study. What impressed me about schools here was their willingness to accept different types of people. Schools were opened to everyone. Age, gender, race, or family did not preclude entering a school. The most important consideration was what a student could learn in the school. As a result, students choose schools rather than always having schools choose students. If universities in Japan could change their policy when they accepted students and be more flexible in meeting the request of society, many problems would be solved.

There are no absolute answers for this issue and there are many other criticisms that I could make at this point. The debate about reforms is still in progress and more observation will be required.

Implications for Further Studies

Because the reform debate involved multiple aspects of the Japanese school system, this study focused on Nakasone's seven major plans and the debate over the selection of the members of the Provisional Education Reform Council. Further research might include an analysis of the debate in the P.E.R.C., the textbook selection system, and the results of current reforms. Specifically, an analysis of the debate in the P.E.R.C. might be a good follow up to this study. There are several reasons to study the P.E.R.C. First, the council went on to further and deeper discussion regarding the school system and its problems, providing a more detailed understanding of Japan's education system. Second, people from various fields were invited to the council. Each person spoke about the issue based on his/her background, so the council would introduce more various perspectives regarding an issue. Third, the P.E.R.C., under the direct control of the Prime Minister, was expected to be free from political pressure, although they actually faced it. The contents of its first two reports, according to the members, came out as a result of strong political pressure. The influence of political power could be analyzed in their

four reports and eventually would lead us to find out who won at the end of the debate.

APPENDIX

The Provisional Education Reform Council

The Provisional Education Reform Council submitted four reports in total in three years. The council was grouped into four to discuss different issues: Group one discussed education for the 21st century; group two discussed vitalizing education and reform to gain the reliability of education; group three discussed lower and middle education; group four discussed higher education. On September 5, 1985 they held the first meeting. On that day, Nakasone asked the council to respond to social changes. He outlined four major problems: (1) school violence and juvenile delinquency; (2) emphasis on education background in society; (3) standardized school education; and (4) adaptation of education to internationalized society. An outline of the reports follows:

Report I June 27, 1985

Part I: The Basic Direction of the Reform

- a. The current situation of education
- b. The importance of education reform
- c. The role of the council in the reform
- d. The goal of the reform (problems that exist in the educational system and reasons the reform is necessary)

Part II: Major Issues in the Discussion

- a. The direction of education for the 21st century
- b. Systematizing lifelong education and correcting high emphasis on education background in the society
- c. Upgrading and drawing the specific characteristics in higher education
- d. Stabilizing and offering more variety in lower and middle education

Part III: Present Plans

- a. The change in recruiting procedure
- b. Shifting from "where do you learn" to "what do you learn"
- c. Reforming the educational background preference society
- d. The reform of the university entrance exam system

Report II April 24, 1986

Part I: The Basic Style of Education for the 21st Century

- a. The history of education
- b. Corruption of school education such as school system and teachers
- c. The goal of education for the 21st century

Part II: Vitalize Education and Upgrade Its Reliability

- a. The shift to lifelong education such as faculty for lifelong education
- b. The connection of family and school and community for lifelong education

- c. The importance of home education, that is, moral education
- d. Improving teachers' quality and benefits; also school conditions such as
40 student limit per class and counseling for school bullies
- e. For higher education, a semester system, a unit system, and the
establishment of a university council

Part III: Reform to Respond to Changes in Society

- a. Internationalization of the school system
- b. Adjusting to the information society

Part IV: Reform in Education Administration and Budgets

- a. Decentralization of the educational system
- b. The change of school management

Report III April 2, 1987

Part I: Move Toward Lifelong Education

- a. Percentile evaluation
- b. Lifelong education

Part II: Lower and Middle Education

- a. Text book censoring
- b. High school system
- c. Preschool, and conditions of handicapped persons
- d. School district system

- e. Cram school issue

Part III: Higher Education System and Management

Part IV: Sports and Education

Part V: Internationalization, Information Society, and Entrance Season.

Part VI: Budget and Administrative Issues

- a. Research, culture, sports
- b. The role of government and the local public bodies
- c. Budget distribution
- d. Introduction of private funds
- e. Educational fee burden on each family

Report IV (Final) August 8, 1987

Part I: The Necessity of Education Reform

- a. Concept

Part II: The Point of View of Education Reform

- a. Goal

Part III: Plans for this Reform

- a. Plans for equipping the system for lifelong education
- b. Variety in higher education
- c. Stability in education and reform
- d. Internationalization

e. Toward the information society

f. Education budget

Part IV: Administration, Entrance Season

a. The administrative (balance)

b. Entrance season

Part V: Promoting Education Reform

Part VI: Budget and administrative issues

a. Standard and school license

b. Decentralization

d. Management of school

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