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I am not, by any stretch of semantic generosity, an expert in either pedagogy or the sociology of knowledge. However, I have been associated with several universities as a teacher, and have published several books pertaining to education in the broad sense of the term, including translations into Japanese of David Riesman's *The Academic Revolution*, Herbert Passin's *Society and Education in Japan*, and Benjamin Duke's *The Japanese School*. That is to say, I am interested in education as a human endeavor in general, and education in Japan in particular. I have also been associated with the educational end of NHK television and sat on the Education Committee in the Upper House of the Diet for a total of four years.

Let me begin with some brief comments about the Sinitic Culture Area--of which Japan is a part--and the possible impact of Confucianism on education. According to Ronald Dore's 1989 speech, "Confucianism, Economic Growth and Social Development," there are four salient characteristics of Confucianism relevant to education. First: dutifulness to a larger collectivity, as opposed to individual rights to the pursuit of happiness. Second: the proclivity toward accepting a system of hierarchy. Third: special roles assigned to elites who are highly educated; those with knowledge are entitled to moral authority to rule. Fourth: rationality. Professor De Bary of Columbia University has maintained that, popular views of Confucianism as authoritarian to the contrary, a case can readily be made for both Liberalism and Democracy within the Confucian tradition.

On the third point, (like the Prussians from whom the Japanese borrowed heavily in the early Meiji years) Confucianism identified the goals of education with the goals of the state, while safeguarding opportunities for individual self-improvement and advancement. In emphasizing the need for merit, rather than rank, education assumed a major role, as

Confucius himself insisted in his *Analects*. His teachings invoked and enhanced the very rigorous tradition of competition in education as a preparation for high societal position, and which contributed to the unique system of mandarin bureaucracy that for over 2000 years ruled China.

So, perhaps, the emphasis traditionally placed upon education as a means of self-improvement and as an avenue for one's promotion from the ranks up the hierarchy, may explain the avid enthusiasm for education observable even among the masses in the Sinitic Culture Area, and may in turn account for the rapid process of modernization now being experienced in the East Asian region as a whole.
Now about Japan.

As a non-Aristotelian nurtured in the tradition where something is and is not at the same time in a mutually permeable way, where something is fair and foul simultaneously, where mutual exclusivity or the digital yes-or-no, zero-or-one dichotomy is not the name of the game, I am both positive and negative about education in Japan. I am cognizant of both strengths and weaknesses, both successes and failures, and will try to put both of them in some sort of perspective.

I am well aware that Japanese schools have been widely and sometimes even wildly admired, as in the case of former U.S. Education Secretary William Bennett, who lauded to the skies the test-coaching cram schools of Japan, which to me are nothing but a scourge. Japanese schools are admired for their success in instilling high levels of literacy and numeracy in the population at large. The Japanese have indeed achieved almost universal literacy, second only to Finland (UNESCO data) at 97% or so, with the U.S. and the U.K. lagging considerably behind.

As for numeracy, in several international UNESCO mathematics tests, Japanese youngsters proved to be the best in the world, although Korean and Chinese students, including Taiwanese and those from Hong Kong, are faring very well recently.

Of course, I am acutely aware of the intricacy of the notion of literacy. There are various definitions of literacy, with wide-ranging ramifications, especially in multi-racial, multi-lingual cultures of the world. There is another emerging problem of functional illiteracy, and I have to confess that I am totally illiterate in computer or mathematical language. Nonetheless, even during the mid-Tokugawa period in the early 19th Century, and on the most conservative estimates, Japan approached 50% literacy among boys and 20% or so among girls.

Apart from over 230 schools established and maintained by different fiefs, for the training of their Samurai retainers, the late 18th century witnessed the birth in Japan of what we call *Terakoya*, or temple schools, where instruction was given to humble folk in reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as practical wisdom to increase men's efficiency in their hereditary occupations. It is noteworthy that, despite the schools' name, most of the instruction given was secular in nature, with very little theological or religious indoctrination.

By 1850, the number of such temple schools had reached almost 6,000, and by the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the number had almost doubled to 12,000. In what is now known as Tokyo, there were well over 1200 such schools enjoying a thriving business. With a total Japanese population of less than 25 million at the time, the prosperity of so many institutions of primary and secondary learning was a truly spectacular phenomenon. As a corollary to formal education, in 1710, Japan already had 600 publishers and booksellers; in 1809, 656 lending libraries were doing business in Tokyo alone. By comparison, in 1837, barely one British child in four or five entered school; and I recall the poor level of mass education referred to in Dickens's novels, alongside of such world-famous institutions of higher learning as Oxford and Cambridge, to say nothing of the great Scottish institutions. The discrepancy was enormous in Britain, while Japan tended to be a bit more egalitarian in the dispensing of knowledge and learning. So, as Japan opened its doors to the rest of the world, it had already met some of the basic requirements for the process of 'modernization' that ensued: in terms of basic literacy and numeracy, in terms of achievement orientation at the grass roots level, in terms of a deeply inculcated sense of duty and obligation toward the immediate community as well as the larger society. When the Meiji oligarchy in 1872 advocated that "there shall be no uneducated families in a community and no unlettered members in a family" it was a bold policy orientation, yet all the ingredients were available.

But if we Japanese have been successful in instilling high levels of literacy and numeracy, we have to ask ourselves if we have been reasonably (if not equally) successful in qualitative terms, in encouraging the students to develop the kind of imagination to cope with ailments peculiar to post-industrial cultures: anomie, alienation, cultural entropy, and most urgently, ecological disaster? Likewise, if we have been moderately successful in inculcating in our students the traditional values of the culture, how successful have we been in inducing them to manage to test those values against the swiftly changing necessities of life.

And what about internationalization or globalization, which is on everybody's lips in today's Japan? The need to make allowances for greater diversity and pluralism in an otherwise highly monolingual, monoracial, endogamous Japan is piously debated. However, have we actually been at all successful in encouraging our students to go beyond the parochial and often exclusionistic barriers of sovereign nation states in their perception and awareness, and to think in broader and perhaps in ecological, Spaceship Earth, terms appropriate to the progressively 'annihilated distance' (Toynbee) and rapidly 'shrunk space' (Reischauer) of our time? The system seems to many overseas observers and Japanese, including ex-Education Minister Michio Nagai (a noted educationist with a broad international background), to be on the brink of serious trouble, with cut-throat competition to get into prestigious schools, conflict over textbook censorship by the government, and educational institutions that are insulated from the larger society.

Take the ecological front. A UNEP (United Nations Environmental Protection) study several years ago showed Japanese youngsters to be the least concerned over the environment, and the least willing to help those individuals and organizations valiantly

engaged in the prevention of further environmental degradation. This is in a country which has claimed to be actively oriented toward symbiosis, toward man with nature in place of man against nature, where love of Nature has been held to be a cardinal virtue and a characteristic of the culture.

Similarly, the degree of ignorance on the part of the young about the legacy of the former imperial, militaristic Japan, especially in its relations to the rest of Asia, is simply appalling. Perhaps reflecting a national proclivity toward historical amnesia, Japanese youngsters are actively not taught about the atrocities inflicted on the Chinese by the one-million-strong Japanese invading forces. (Only 6 million Jews were massacred, while we were responsible for the deaths of 12 million Chinese, even by a conservative estimate.) An expert in contemporary history was recently asked by a serious university student in Tokyo if Japan had ever been at war with the United States, and, if so, which side had won. The student was obviously fed on television and newspaper commentaries on the weak dollar and the strong yen, and American tendencies to be defensive in economic and trade matters. Disturbingly enough, many youngsters were mesmerized by the “Japan as No. 1 Syndrome” (the term I coined after Harvard Professor Ezra Vogel’s *Japan as Number One*).

So something is definitely rotten with the state of education in Japan, despite its facade of success. We have been less than successful in preparing our youngsters for the requirements of further globalization.

On a somewhat different level, Japanese youngsters today appear to be long on hedonism and short on the kind of Shinto-Confucian-Buddhist work ethic which so far accounts for much of Japan’s success. Even university students in more than middling institutions don’t work half as hard as at overseas institutions. The university typically is referred to as a “leisure-land,” and students while away at least the first two or three years until such time as employment opportunities begin to loom large in their third or fourth year.

Let me try to shed some light on the less positive sides of the academic picture. Our youngsters do well in mathematics tests, and the level of mathematics instruction in our primary and secondary education is high. We have three recipients of the very coveted Fields Prize, given every four years, unlike the annual Nobel Prizes. When I asked the first Japanese Fields winner, Professor Kunihiko Kodaira if the level of mathematics we boast of was really first-rate in the world, he replied: Yes, first-rate as far as finding solutions to existing questions is concerned, but never first-rate when it comes to creating new, unprecedented questions.

And yet, given the unprecedented nature of the problems we face all across the spectrum of human existence, what counts is the ability to think the unthinkable, to imagine the unimaginable. But Professor Kodaira seems to believe that we in Japan are sadly lacking in this kind of creative and innovative ingenuity.

This failing emerges more sharply when we realize that Japan has produced only 5 Nobel laureates in the natural sciences, whereas Britain has 64, Germany 60, France 24, Russia 10, Italy 7, to say nothing of the U.S., which has 156 scientists on the Nobel list.

This paucity of Nobel winners in Japan totally incommensurate with its economic, industrial, academic and educational might, appears to be illustrative of our inadequacies in basic, pure research, as distinct from product-related, merchandise-oriented applied research. Alas, Japanese institutions of higher learning, which should act as the bastion of basic research, are seriously handicapped in funding. The preponderance of profit-related applied research by companies over pure, basic research is becoming increasingly apparent, with universities begging the companies to distribute some share of their product-related research, weakening still further the base for basic research.

It is also an open secret that Japanese university students need to study very little, in comparison with students in the best British and American institutions. Here, Ronald Dore's distinction between education and qualifications can be a very useful tool. To him, education involves changing people: it depends on awakening and sustaining by a continuous process of partial satisfaction and further stimulation, curiosity, and the desire for self-development, the desire to understand, the desire to achieve, and the desire to master. Qualification, on the other hand, is merely "instrumental."

The passive absorption of ready-made answers in order to become qualified, certified, and entitled to a job, a salary and social status. Education results from the desire to learn, qualification results from the desire to be certified as having learnt. Education is learning as an end itself, or as a means to action; qualification is the merely instrumental use of learning, not to do, but just to be. (*Education in Tokugawa Japan*)

This is a serious and stern indictment of the state of education in Japan by a highly erudite yet compassionate observer. Students are interested only in being on the automatic escalator that guarantees their post-graduation jobs and careers. It is their admission to best universities that counts to employers, who begin to recruit even sophomores--"cutting the rice green," they say. No wonder 75-80% of a recent freshman class at Tokyo University spent at least one year in 'cram school,' the only purpose of which is to coach youngsters to learn all the 'inert facts' (in the words of the great philosopher Alfred North Whitehead) they will need in preparation for the entrance examination, also known as examination hell. Another problem is that in the typical Japanese classroom animated spontaneity among students and between teachers and students, except at kindergarten and primary school levels, is stifled. This discourages both non-Japanese teachers and Japanese students returning from overseas. The nail that stands out, as we say, is hammered down. Students who actively ask questions or try to debate issues make themselves *persona non grata*, and are branded nuisances not only by their peers but also by their teachers. This is the root cause of *ijime*, or bullying, in which an unusual child (unusually bright, or unusual because he or she is of Korean ancestry, or has been to school in the U.S.) is hounded--sometimes to suicide--by his peers, often with the acquiescence of the teacher.

Japanese children who are ambitious, in the sense of getting into the best schools, or who are the offspring of ambitious parents, quite literally lose their youth--from the time they are about 12 until they enter a university. Many of these youngsters are burnt-out by the time they reach a university, and Professor Koji Nakanishi, Japan's most likely candidate

for the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, argues that the university entrance examination is the major culprit and should be completely and finally abolished.

For a long time Japan has been known as a society with a minimum of anti-intellectualism. When David Riesman and his wife visited Japan for the first time in 1960 as people-seers (instead of sight-seers, as he put it), they were impressed with the apparent lack of anti-intellectualism in Japanese society. They experienced the jam-packed trains during rush-hours in Tokyo, and they were amazed that many commuters were reading serious authors such as Sartre, Marx, and Lord Keynes, while precariously hanging on to straps. Riesman wondered whether the difficulty of acquiring a working knowledge of several thousand Chinese characters guarded against anti-intellectualism. But others have pointed to this same rote memory work as detrimental to creative thought.

We should also perhaps ask ourselves whether quantity and quality can be pursued simultaneously in education. To put it rather radically, is democratic education always doomed to mediocrity? Can excellence be an achievable goal in mass education? Since 1840, when Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of his concern that mass democracy might lead to a culture of mediocrity, this has been a perennial theme in any serious debate on public education and democracy in the U.S. and, though to a lesser extent, in Japan as well. We will have to face up to this big question sooner or later (perhaps sooner rather than later) in Japan. The tyranny of the majority is quite possible in a Japan which is becoming a mass democracy at an ever increasing rate and on a progressively larger scale. Can we aim at excellence and quantity at the same time?

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Academic Apartheid at Japan's National Universities by **Ivan P. Hall**

The university is the most critical player in the intellectual relations between countries--as the institution that forms the leadership of any modern state; as a seminal influence on the school system and mass media; and as a seat of learning and a social community. Courses on other nations and cultures, and the short-term presence of foreign students, exchange professors and visiting researchers all add to the cosmopolitan flavor of a campus. More basic are the permanently tenured foreign staff who through their teaching, writing, and full participation as colleagues make a continuing, long-term contribution.

Japan's national universities (*kokuritsu daigaku*) provide the litmus test for any evaluation of its recent claims to have "internationalized" its academic staff. They are vastly more prestigious than the private schools and continue to monopolize access to the higher bureaucracy and much of Japan's blue-ribbon corporate world. Their restrictions on foreign professors are system-wide and deliberate, having been made explicit in statutory regulations and official justifications; and their governmental tie makes them more indicative than the private universities of the attitudes and intentions of Japan's leadership. Recently, a threatened avalanche of dismissals of senior foreign staff has been spreading anxiety and consternation throughout the foreign professoriate at national universities in response to a directive issued by the Ministry of Education (*Mombusho*) in December of 1992. (For the full text of this directive and a translation by the author, see the page following this article.)

The *Asahi Shimbun* has reported that most universities took the directive to mean that they should get rid of *gaikokujin kyoshi* (foreign teachers) over the age of 50 who are in the two upper salary brackets. The *Mombusho* reportedly has ruled out the hiring of any new teachers over the age of 40. One foreign scholar has written the press that even instructors over 35 are now being excluded from interviews at the national schools. Some of the older foreigners have been made to sign agreements to move on after two years. It is as though the U.S. Department of Education had ordered the leading U.S. universities not to hire any non-Americans over the age of 39--and this in the second largest system of higher education in the industrialized world!

This ageist assault on the seasoned foreign staff employed under the highly restrictive *gaikokujin kyoshi* system dating from 1893--still the dominant hiring pattern--comes on top of a failure to genuinely integrate foreign scholars with regular Japanese staff under the new *gaikokujin kyoin* (foreign staffer) system mandated by the Diet in 1982 as a means of "internationalizing" the national universities. The backsliding under this new system is even more disappointing than the regression under the old one. The historical and technical background is as follows:

Under the century-old *kyoshi* system (the term can also have the more pejorative ring of 'pedagogue), foreign teachers enjoyed a higher salary, but were denied professorial titles, participation in departmental and faculty meetings, the supervision of dissertations, permanent job security, and other rights and duties pertaining uniformly to the Japanese staff. Ranging in effect from professors to lecturers, but all lumped together as *kyoshi*, foreigners served in a generously remunerated but separate, inferior, and short-term academic echelon. Even today the *gaikokujin kyoshi* are best seen as the functional equivalent of foreign technical advisors in Third World developing countries--as transitory, disposable transmitters of foreign knowledge or techniques--rather than as fellow laborers in the ongoing quest for human knowledge. They have never been the genuine scholarly reciprocal of those numerous Japanese academics employed by universities in other advanced industrial countries.

In response to heavy external criticism, including a severe OECD report in 1971, the new legislation in 1982 authorized the employment of foreign professors at Japanese national

and prefectural/municipal universities on terms identical to those for regular Japanese academic staff (*kyoin*), but with one enormous exception that quickly undermined the original purpose and spirit of the law. Although intended by its original sponsors to provide permanent employment similar to that of Japanese professors, and widely advertised as offering academic “tenure” to foreigners, the law as finally passed left the period of service to the discretion of each university. Twelve years later, as of 1994, only four foreign scholars (two at Tokyo and two at Kyushu universities) have been given open-ended, non-term-limited posts identical to those held by their Japanese colleagues. All the other national institutions have opted for short-term contracts, averaging about three years.

This led to cheery announcements by certain schools that they were now ready to “tenure foreign scholars with exactly the same salary, titles, duties and rights as we Japanese--and a three-year contract into the bargain!” A contract with a time limit, however, is not “tenure, and a working situation without the most fundamental consideration--job security--can hardly be considered equivalent to a permanent position. The regular Japanese staff at all Japanese universities are in effect “tenured,” in the American sense of the term, from the moment they receive full-time employment. The new foreign *kyoin*--although now enjoying academic titles and the privilege of attending interminable faculty meetings--have very little clout in academic management since they are entirely dependent on the good will of Japanese colleagues for their contract renewals.

By 1987, there had been a modest utilization of the new *gaikokujin kyoin* positions at the national universities. Nationwide figures from the *Mombusho* showed twenty national universities employing fifty foreign professors, associate professors, and lecturers in the new “foreign staff” category. However, only thirteen of these were at the more prestigious *kyuteidai* (former imperial universities), and half of them were to be found at relatively minor schools or non-university research centers.

As of 1992, there were 2,685 regular foreign staff (of all levels and types) among the 129,029 full-time staffers at all Japanese universities. Of these foreigners, 1,780 were to be found in the private sector, 819 at national universities, and 86 at municipal and other “public” universities. At the rank of professor and associate professor, there were 134 foreigners among a total of 32,230 at national universities, and 1,002 among a total of 41,004 at the private schools. However, there has been no relaxing of the term-appointment rule nor any change since 1987 in the number of non-terms, genuinely tenured appointments at national universities--still, as of 1994, only four, at Tokyo and Kyushu.

The saddest episode in this implementation process occurred in 1985 at the “new model” University of Tsukuba, which had already decreed a four-year cut-off for its 31 *kyoshi* under the old system. That April, after the start of the new academic year--and with no place for them to go--it summarily fired, as a result of its own internal politics, four of the longer-serving *kyoshi* (Korean, German, American, and Taiwanese), who had initially been asked not to move elsewhere and promised new contracts as *kyoin* from 1985 on.

By contrast, the large number of foreign scholars tenured at American universities is common knowledge. In the Japan Foundation’s directory of Japan specialists in the United

States and Canada, fully 17% of the 1,420 individuals listed are Japanese men and women born in Japan, and many of these individuals--while permanent residents of the United States or Canada--retain their Japanese citizenship. Many other Japanese nationals can be found in mainline disciplines unrelated to Japanese language or culture, such as MIT's Nobel prize-winning microbiologist Susumu Tonegawa, or the recent Dean of Princeton's Engineering School, Dr. Hisashi Kobayashi. To these, of course, would have to be added even greater numbers of non-Japanese foreign scholars working on a tenured basis in the U.S.

For the past quarter century university appointments have generally been open to all qualified comers in all of the advanced industrial nations of Western Europe, North America, and the British Commonwealth. American and Commonwealth universities have long recruited on a world-wide basis. France has often been cited by the Japanese as another administrative state where university staff, as civil servants, are required to possess French nationality. But even in France, with the reforms following the great campus upheavals of the late 1960s, foreign scholars are now eligible for all but the top administrative posts. Similarly, in West Germany--where professors were public officials of the individual states (*Laender*) all restrictions had been lifted by the 1970s on the employment and advancement of foreign scholars into any teaching or administrative post.

Does Japan's patent academic apartheid matter, beyond the fates of the individual foreign scholars concerned? I think it does. Japan's avoidance of human variety and energy, based not on professional qualifications but on a simplistic national/ethnic criterion, deprives Japanese universities not only of the scholarly production for which Western schools hire internationally, but also of the good will and social interchange with intellectual elites abroad that Japan badly needs in meeting its vastly expanded international responsibilities. Japanese calling for a greater foreign professorial presence on Japan's campuses have argued that it would bring a fresh stimulus and challenge to the Japanese staff. Others, making the same point back-handedly, have confessed that the real resistance derives from the fear most of the Japanese staff have of foreign scholarly competition. They worry (rightly or wrongly) that the outlanders might publish more voluminously, cancel fewer lectures, or even stir up too much intellectual controversy. Still others assert that non-Japanese would never fit in socially.

For the United States, this imbalance in academic employment opportunities has had a subtle if largely unnoticed impact on political, trade, historical (e.g., in interpretations of the Pacific War), and other bilateral issues by giving Japan a stronger rhetorical footing in America than the U.S. enjoys in Japan. American scholars in Japan who could provide a stronger intellectual presence--having been around long enough to speak and write the Japanese language well and acquire other accessory skills--are barred from respectable academic niches, and normally return to the U.S. after the first whack of the revolving door if they are set on serious academic careers. That leaves the briefly visiting American academic superstar--who often knows little of Japan, gets whirled around on a magic carpet of sedulous attention, and re-crosses the Pacific without having left much of a dent behind.

What should be of concern to our Japanese friends, of course, is that the issue of their academic closed shop is gradually being connected by others to the broader demands for an open market, and for reciprocating to foreign journalists, lawyers, scholars, and students those same professional opportunities that Japanese nationals have long enjoyed in other countries. Since Japan's national universities are government-run, it would not be inappropriate for U.S. federal and other agencies active in cultural relations with Japan to overcome their shyness about giving possible offense, and raise a judicious eyebrow or two. These might include the U.S. Information Service at our Tokyo embassy; the federally-funded Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission in Washington; the binational Japan-U.S. Educational Commission (Fulbright Program) in Tokyo; and the inter-governmental U.S.-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON).

As far as its prestigious national universities are concerned, Japan isn't opening up as advertised--it's closing down. Full speed, in reverse!

IVAN P. HALL is the biographer of Mori Arinori, Japan's first minister of education. He recently reached an out-of-court settlement with *Gakushuin*, a private University, over matters identical to those described in this article. He is a member of the Board of Advisers of the Japan Policy Research Institute.
