

Overview of my final project

I talked with Huw(my supervisor), and got an overview of the final project.

Theme: Re-imagining higher education for the pacific good in Japan, engaging with futures and wicked problems

Research question: 'What are the problems in post-compulsory education in Japan to reach ideal futures?

Method:

- Literature Review to examine the ideal futures
- Visualise and Structurelise current problems to reach the ideal futures

I envision a society where fulfilled citizens continue to learn, actively participate, and work together to create better futures. Currently, in Japan, my colleagues and I are striving to contribute to that future by creating opportunities for lifelong education inspired by the system of [folk high schools](#) established in Denmark about 200 years ago but to achieve the future we envision, we should confront various problems, which are multifaceted and entangled. For example...

Adults' low motivation for learning

Many adults do not learn or are unable to learn after university. In comparison with 14 Asian countries, the proportion of those who answered 'nothing' to whether they are learning outside their place of work was 46.7%, the highest among the other countries (PERSOL RESEARCH AND CONSULTING CO., LTD., 2019). In another survey, the number of those who answered 'I have something I would like to learn' was only 35%, which has decreased since the survey began in 1998 (Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living, 2022). This can be attributed to long working hours and remnants of the post-war work culture, where lifetime employment was taken for granted

and did not force people to relearn. In addition, a highly homogeneous culture that makes citizens stop sensing the need to learn could be another reason.

Not fulfilled individuals

The low level of well-being could contribute to losing individuals' motivation to learn new things and participate in society. The low level of happiness in Japan is famous (World Happiness Report, 2023). Given the humbleness of the Japanese people and the values of happiness that differ from those in the West, it cannot be said that this survey accurately represents our state. However, there is no doubt that there are MANY unfulfilled individuals. The suicide rate is 15.3% (World Health Organization, 2019), and 45% of young people have suicidal thoughts (KYODO NEWS, 2023).

There are many reasons behind this, but one of them could be our examination ordeal. People who lose them tend to be treated like losers in society and see themselves as incapable of what they want to do. Even those who have won the competition may not live a life tailored to each individual's values, as the outside has always judged them. Although I do not have any objective evidence, many of my friends who are said to have so-called successful careers are very insecure. They fear missing out on a career and high salary and struggle to breathe in their workplace. Of course, there is no space for thinking about society. They have the intelligence, perseverance and problem-solving skills to overcome challenging tests. Is there a way to give more of their abilities and wealth back to society?

Social participation

I am also worried about our inactive and apathetic attitude toward society. Many people think of society as a vast state or government, and only 20% of young people believe that society can be changed by them (Nippon Foundation, 2019). Moreover, politics is generally considered a taboo subject, and people avoid expressing their political opinions in public so as not to cause conflict. The stagnant political and social status would have also deprived citizens of motivation. While

the same political party (Liberal Democratic Party) has been in power for a long time, and many people doubt their policies, there have been no opposition parties to counter it.

All of the above are entangled with each other, and it is hard to know where to start to achieve the ideal future. However, through my final project, by understanding and visualising them, and clarifying the relationships, I want to help those currently trying to take action towards better futures.

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