

Decolonisation and new perspectives

Although it has not appeared on my blog before, while working on the assignment from “Educating a Challenging Future”, I began to think “Decolonisation” was my keyword. To be honest, when the word “Colony” was mentioned, I had never thought of it as a crucial matter to me and somewhat recognised it as an issue in other areas of the world. However, I realised that I had taken my colonised self for granted to the extent that I was no longer aware of it.

The definition of “colonisation” here is “the political and economic domination of one country by another for its benefit, and the acceptance of the state of domination as natural and inevitable.” Although Japan has never been dominated directly, our society has been influenced by Western countries since the war with many countries in the late 1800s. For example, we are unconsciously forced to believe that we have to learn English to success in society and people from Western countries are superior than us. The symbol of success for fresh graduates from Japanese universities is to be employed by American consulting firms. Many of us often eat bread and dairy products but they were not used to be a part of our food culture.

Seeing Japan as a colonised country seems to give me ideas to create a better society. Once I look back at our own lives in light of the powers that have probably influenced us, I would be able to question, and find facts and answers that I have overlooked (Several friends of mine are trying to decipher Edo period recipes and contribute to sustainable eating and farming. This would not have been happened if they had an assumption that our past has less value than the ones from the West).

When glancing over past academic literature with the words “decolonialisation” and “Japan”, I could not find anything that looked at the Japanese as colonised subjects(I did not take so much time to find it, so the literature may exist). This fact is one of my current motivations for facing “decolonisation”.

*This time, I looked at Japan from the perspective of a colonised country, but I must also acknowledge and take a responsibility that we have a cruel history of colonising countries and deteriorating indigenous cultures of remote areas in Japan.

*If I make the unit of colonisation smaller than the country, I would be able to see new impacts more. For example, I come from a rural area in Japan. Although we are Japanese with the same culture as people living in Tokyo, we also have many incompatible cultures in our lives. For example, I can live with little money in my hometown because many people grow vegetables, exchange what they produce, and live by complementing each other. In many contexts, life in rural areas tends to be recognised as inferior to metropolitan one. But isn't it colonisation by urban capitalists to impose that earning money and living in the city is success?

*The photo taken by me. The ordinary day at the table with my ex-roomie.

“Public Achievement”

At the end of last year, I was asked the question by my friend, “How much do individuals need to take action to make changes in society?” She did not believe society would change unless the heads of the political and social systems were

replaced.

I cannot get this question out of my head. Looking back on my experience, although I grew up in the Japanese system, I have been very impressed and influenced by the Danish attitudes, which are “being aware that each individual is a member of society, believing that we can modify society by ourselves, and always continuing dialogue and taking action in the community to which we belong.”

However, it would be hard for most of us to recognise society as something we can change. Considering my friend’s question and our dialogue, she would think society is created by someone else or determined by limited leaders. Also, the definition of “society” would be a large organisation such as a nation or prefecture, and these recognitions would keep society away from her.

Certainly, because our population is still more than 100 million, it is almost impossible to dream we can make a prompt change nationwide. In addition, my friend said she had felt hopeless toward politics after the regime change in 2009, as we could not have seen any drastic positive changes since then.

There are multiple backgrounds and excuses why we cannot be proactive toward politics and society. Nevertheless, I do not want to give up. I am worried that we tend to reach a conclusion that we cannot change anything. It means we stop thinking about our lives. It may also lead to a deterioration in the quality of citizens’ voices.

Then, how can we deal with this problem? How can we continue thinking about society and politics and keep moving, even if we feel hopeless?

I came across a method/approach called “Public Achievement,” which was established by the University of Minnesota in 1990.

What is “Public Achievement”?

<https://sites.augsburg.edu/publicachievement/background/history/>

To summarise, the idea is to clarify the relationship between the individual and society, to make individuals feel that they are connected to society and that taking their own action is meaningful. At the last part of its approach, participants implement small action in their local communities.

It is practised in various regions of the world and has also

been implemented in Japan by Tokai University. The below article introduces how Tokai University have adopted Public Achievement into their curriculum.

Horimoto, M. and Ninomiya-Lim, S. (2020). Nurturing Citizenship in Higher Education: Public Achievement-style Education at Tokai University. *Educational Studies in Japan*, 14(0), pp.29–38. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7571/esjkyoiku.14.29>.

As I think this approach seems effective, I have just started to think how to put it into practice in the school I run. But at the same time, I wondered whether it would suit the Japanese culture. I can't quite put everything together, and it seems pretty far from the conclusion, but that's what's on my mind at the moment.

The header photo taken by me in Finland. Dining table helps us to have dialogues and compose a small community/society.

Reflective Blog Summary

Key ideas from your blog so far:

I have thought about “How can adults make ‘better’ choices or actions?” so far. Although the definition of ‘better’ needs to be defined, I have strongly focused on the process/background of adults in higher education and beyond to ‘(1)find the learning they want to learn’ and ‘(2)actively participate in society and politics.’ I would like to explore both individuals’ decision-making processes and external influences while detecting factors and hurdles to reaching the ideals. The themes (1) and (2) appear to be different, but the reasons why I would like to dig into them are almost the same. I am concerned about the situation where individuals cannot focus on what they really need to take care of, such as their interests and surrounding communities. In modern society, we tend to focus on individual profits rather than contributing to society?

Perhaps 'successful' people with prestigious academic backgrounds and high-paid jobs would be who I want to know more about through my final project. Both (1) and (2) still attract me, I am rather interested in (2) because I idealise a society in which each individual is a creator of community.

Key methods explored so far:

I am considering adopting life story interviews if I pursue theme (1). The interview subjects are postgraduate students who entered the University of Edinburgh in September 2023. I would gather students studying from as many different majors/parts of the world as possible. Through the interview, I would challenge them to detect their backgrounds, such as educational experience, culture, and parental situations, to decide to study their current major here. Because interviews using predetermined questions strongly include the interviewee's intentions and assumptions in the questions, I would simultaneously obtain and analyse something created by the subjects separately from this project. For example, they could be a personal statement submitted before entering the university or individual posts on social media.

Although I have not mentioned the idea of methods in the previous posts in my blog if I pursue theme (2), the participatory approach could be adopted. After exploring the literature on the process of people actively participating in politics, I would hypothesise how people get engaged with them. Then, I would plan interventions to enhance political participation, apply them to workshops or other appropriate approaches, and test their effectiveness. If (2) is to be taken forward, the target audience is assumed to be Japanese because I am sure that we are generally non-politically active from my research so far. However, if similar trends were found in other areas during the preliminary research stage, the target group may be broadened or changed.

Major points of uncertainty:

I am still determining which theme I should take for my final project. Also, I am unsure whether to target Japanese

people/society or other areas. I desire to utilise the results of my final project in the life-long learning programme aiming individual development and promoting democracy I run in Japan. Also, I have a huge alumni community (more than 200 people) embracing people who are willing to contribute to my research, which seems a valuable resource for my project. On the other hand, considering that I would stay in Edinburgh only until graduation and currently have chances to connect with people from all over the world, that research could utilise the resources in the university.

My project as I currently understand it:

If I had to decide on my project today, I would tackle the following question:

“How does political participation be promoted among Japanese adults?”

I would explore literature about social structures that tend to pursue individual interests rather than politics and society and cultural backgrounds that make people avoid politics. Then, I would design workshops to encourage people to get interested in society and take political action. Targets would be young people, thinking about the future impact, or all generations in order to identify overall trends.

Through Andrea's class, I learned that sharing realities (Osman, 2017) and listening carefully to opinions (Murdoch et al., 2020) can potentially change individual attitudes and behaviour. In Jen's class, I also learned how important the existence of friends is to activists (Campos & Martins, 2023). These could be the basis for thinking about participatory approaches. Since I have already conducted a workshop with several Japanese ([its critical reflection](#)) as an assignment for the 'Relationality, Creative Practice and Education' class, aimed at creating awareness and behaviour change

towards Palestinians, it could be the foundation of my project.

Next steps:

For both themes (1) and (2), I will search other research methods, read articles dealing with similar themes and explore what methodologies are used. Also, I would like to improve the accuracy of my hypothesis under the above themes : (1) People tend to have money/social status rather than interests. (2) People(especially Japanese) are not so much interested in what happens in society and politics.

In addition to the individual research(reading literature), I would also like to have conversations with friends from different and similar backgrounds about the themes, brainstorm and ask them to come up with questions to improve my project.

Reference:

Osman, W. (2017). 15. Jamming the Simulacrum. *Culture Jamming*, 348–364. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479850815.003.0020>

Murdoch, D., English, A. R., Hintz, A., & Tyson, K. (2020). Feeling Heard : Inclusive Education, Transformative Learning, and Productive Struggle. *Educational Theory*, 70(5), 653–679. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12449>

Campos, R., & Martins, J. (2023). Political socialisation narratives of young activists. Contexts, settings, and actors. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2224742>

The photo of the header was taken by me.

Gradual shift of my interest

As Semester 1 gets to a close, I sense a gradual shift in my interests. Through Jen's class assignments, I had the opportunity to delve into Meritocracy and Skill fetishisation, topics that have intrigued me since before enrollment. This has led me to question whether I should continue exploring this field as my final project. Then, I found myself concerned that the significant trend promoting pursuing personal interests, such as improving abilities and skills, may lead people to lose interest in societal matters.

(Capitalism encourages the maximisation of individuals' profits, and the digitisation of education reduces physical contact with others. It seems we potentially diminishing our ability to cooperate with others.)

While I immerse myself in assignments, the brutal wars happen in the world. It makes me wonder, "What should I respect most?" though I want to believe that my studies will eventually contribute to peace.

After all, I've come to realise that I want to research how education can invoke an awareness of individuals being part of society and foster people to get involved with society more.

My current hypothesis to implement them includes:

- Increase the number of individuals who are satisfied with themselves and have the capacity to support others.
- Create opportunities for individuals to believe that making changes in society will make their own lives more comfortable.
- Nurture the experience of creating a society from an early age. (In the Danish school I attended, students were allowed to establish their own rules, fostering a habit of creating and maintaining a small community. I believe this contributes to Denmark's high voter turnout.)

Fortunately, I have found a friend in Japan who shares a

similar research interest, and we frequently have casual chats about the research. I have also scheduled a meeting with a PhD student researching citizenship, hoping to get some inspiration from our conversation.

□ taken by me. Nature constantly changes as my interest does.

Another exploring: How people participate in politics more

I am finally getting around to blogging. It has been challenging, especially for the past several weeks, because I could not balance studying, working, and private life. I somehow could find a way to get through each day, asking myself if I needed to let something go.

Today, I'm going to explore a different theme from what I wrote before on this blog, though it still connects to them if you look at it carefully □

How people participate in politics more

The article I encountered as the reading in Jen's class made me think about its theme. Recently, I have been feeling sad/helpless since the war happened again last month. While I took some small actions to contribute to innocent people, I have been in a dilemma whenever I was about to return to being apathetic in my busy life. Its situation has also given me a passion to consider the theme.

The short summary of the reading

Campos, R. M. D. O., & Martins, J. C. (2023). *Political socialisation narratives of young activists. Contexts,*

settings, and actors. Journal of Youth Studies

- It focuses on how young people in Portugal become activists in informal settings.
- Campos argues that youth political engagement happens outside of institutions. Also, he claims we should focus more on young people's agency and their capacity to collectively build knowledge and develop innovative forms of political action.
- The relationships with friends and peers are crucial in their formation as activists.
- Especially among particular minorities or devalued social groups, cohorts have substantial power to make them become activists.
- The significance of the top-down dissemination of knowledge and information in educational and family contexts is beyond dispute (Quintelier 2015; Terriquez and Kwon 2015)

Personal impressions and thoughts

I reflected on my experience and realised how significant my friends' influence had been when I gradually became politically interested. Furthermore, I agree with his quote that parents play an antagonistic role in forming the political identity.

I have been thinking that we should help individuals to get more fulfilled if we encourage them to participate in politics. Because I believe people can think about others and society if they have leeway both mentally and physically in their lives. However, after reading this article, I found another way. When people have strong difficulty to survive in society, it leads them to take political action. As Campos stated, being an activist and belonging to a specific activist group gives them self-justification.

Question after reading: Can only those who are socially vulnerable people/minorities be politically active?

Not answers, but some thoughts

- While I don't fit into the minority described in this article, I'm sure I'm a minority in certain contexts. Moreover, I believe that everyone can be a minority. We have characteristics that are different from others.
- Maybe inactive people(including me) can survive and feel mostly okay if they don't take action.
- In the first place, people in modern society tend not to have enough time to think about others and to be obsessed with what seems to help individual lives, such as money and jobs.

Can you see how I connected it with what I posted in the last sentence? Hopefully, see you soon!

□ Taken by me when I went to the fundraising event for the citizens in Gaza with Josua. The old lady from Syria shared tasty coffee and homemade sweets with us.

Initial research design idea

To get my 4th blog started, I will briefly reiterate the current idea of my research.

Pre-learning / The process of finding what people want to learn

Why do people choose what they are NOT interested in? What is their journey/method of realising what they crave?

>>> [The detailed background on my 2nd post](#)

Through the last interview with Josua and daily conversations with my lovely folks, I have been convinced that my research could be applied not only to my home country but also to other areas. However, I am also sure that the above question is still too broad and includes too entangled backgrounds.

Considering the time and resources available for my research, I've narrowed down my scope and evolved the question a bit.

Questions: Are postgraduate students of UOE studying what they are purely interested in? What influences their decision to enrol in postgraduate study? What kind of external factors do they have? If they are internally motivated, why and how could they find your passion?

Target: Postgraduate students in UOE(class of 2023/2024)

The research design idea:

1. **Surveys** from students with as many different attributes as possible
2. **Life history interview** after designating interviewees who have answered the survey
 - To identify the person's motivations and influences that cannot be uncovered by the survey
3. ? (The method that would lead the deep insights)
 - To detect invisible factors that respondents cannot express just by being asked intentional questions and answering verbally
 - To see their pure decision-making process not influenced by the interview
 - How about collecting the personal statements that students submitted to the university? Through text mining or another investigation, would I see some factors that have influenced the students?
 - I was inspired by the photovoice method* introduced in the Future

Concerns if I implement the above

- Is the question still too broad?
- How do I identify whether they are motivated by external or internal factors?
- I will have to care about the ethical aspect when I collect personal data.

While I am about to finish writing this blog, I'm getting motivated to explore more about the research design!

*Reference

Gravett(2018), *Spaces and Places for Connection in the Postdigital University*

Clues for my final project by chats in Week 5

After my first supervision last Friday, I had several opportunities to talk/brainstorm ideas for my final project.

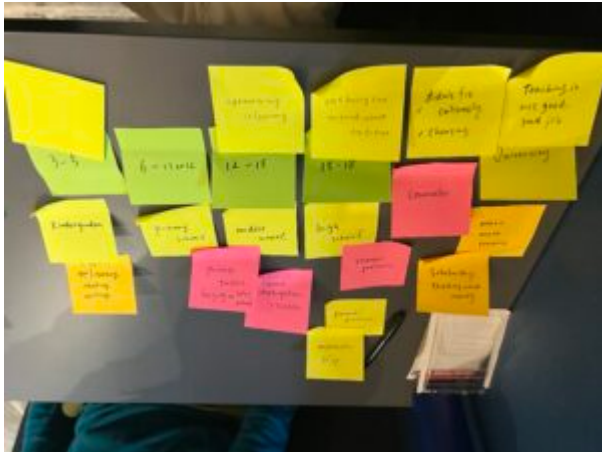
Premise: I am now curious why people sometimes choose what they are NOT interested in, especially in higher education.

More detail >>> [The last blog post on October 9](#)

No.1 Talk with Josua

Soon after I shared a rough idea for my final project, he gave a surprising comment, *"What you described is my life!"* Coincidentally, I found the best person for my first interview. Until a while ago, I assumed the situation in which people chose their learning path without their interest was

common only in my country. However, I realised it was also familiar in other areas.



(I'm a big fan of physical sticky notes, while I'm getting used to Miro ☐)

Through the interview with Josua, I found the following points were common in Indonesia and Japan.

▪ Difference between city and countryside

- Students living in the city are more externally influenced than people in the countryside(e.g., High expectations to go to a good school).

- High expectations from parents

- Some of them want to brag about their children to others.

- **Inevitability of thinking about money**

- Josua decided to join business school because of a scholarship.

- Don't stop and go straight!

- While some Western countries adopt the system of apprenticeship or allow people to take a break and think about their learning/career path, it is much rare in Indonesia and Japan. People are expected to go to university soon after graduating high school. Repeating the same grade or taking a rest while they are at the age supposed to be students could be a sign of “failure.”

- **Scarce chance for students to consider their futures**

- They can't even come up with ideas to take a break.
- They tend to follow what others do.

Josua also explained to me there were distinctions between ethnic groups, such as Chinese and Javanese culture in Indonesia. Although I found lots in common between Josua(Chinese-Indonesian) and me(Japanese) this time, there would also be differences between cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

No.2 Talk with Jen

I talked with Jen in the drop-in session on Wednesday. I wanted to ask her about what happens in European countries. In the session, she told me the controversial news about **“low-value degrees”** in the U.K.

[The press release from the government](#)

[The article of The Guadian](#)

Simply put, the prime minister announced that the government would cap the number of students when a faculty doesn't produce graduate outcomes that support the economy. I got worried that it would encourage people to learn for money, sometimes not allowing them to pursue their pure interest. Considering it is discussed in the U.K., I may be able to ask my question to European(at least the U.K.) countries.

Throughout exploring this week, I have been convinced that the issue I want to dig into is universal, not just a problem in Japan. Next week, I will continue to have interviews/brainstorming with my classmates who grew up in different cultures, and read more about what Jen and Yuemiao

told me.

Exploring for my authentic theme and question

To be honest, soon after I finished writing my first post, I realised that what I had written here was superficial and not what I authentically wanted to tackle. I was disappointed in myself for a while...

I told what I did to a friend from another faculty member, who introduced me to the book below, which shows how to find authentic research questions that continuously motivate people. Since then, I have followed its description and re-thought the themes/questions for my final project. **This post shares with you the book and what thoughts/ideas are in my head.** They are not entirely set in stone yet, but I guess I am in the right direction.

The book I introduced

[*"Where Research Begins: Choosing a Research Project That Matters to You"*](#)

(Introducing the specific method/process of finding a research question people would be highly motivated to pursue)

My current idea

Pre-learning / The process of finding what people want to learn

Are people learning what they want to learn? What is their journey/method of realising what they crave?

'I need a masters because I want a good job.'

'I hate studying, but I can't get a good job if I don't go to university.'

'My parents expect me to go to university.'

I often hear these comments, and sometimes I “feel” the same thing even when people make plausible reasons why they learn. I am worried about them studying while externally motivated.

Is it truly good for them? Although I don't say internal motivation is necessary, I believe it brings people happiness and energy to tackle difficulties while learning. Furthermore, considering the impacts on society, won't there be a lot of academic innovations if people don't want to learn? If such people get a job relating to their studies, won't they perform well? I assume people who study without personal motivation would negatively impact society.

Reflecting on what I do at work, I am providing people with the time/chance to think/explore about what they want to learn/do in their lives. Currently, I am making educational programs run by the private sector in a rural town in Japan. However, there must be a lot of ways to encourage people to find their motivation and critical process that would be common in multiple ways, so I am eager to know about that.

This is what I am currently thinking about. I am open to any feedback and comments, so please feel free to leave your ideas! They will be helpful for me to dig into the theme/question for my research.

Just for the record:

Here are the other words which I naturally got excited while reading academic papers. Could they also be good clues to find the theme?

-Playfulness

- Simplicity
- Less options
- doing/being
- Meritocracy
- Physicality
- Possibilities
- Career break
- Exploring the unknown

□ taken by me this weekend in Loch Lomond.