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An International Comparative Study of Educational Consciousness Among the Korean, Chinese, and Japanese*

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I. Problem

Korea, China, and Japan are three major East Asian countries which, in no small amount, share linguistic, historic, and cultural roots. In spite of their similarities, however, there are great differences among them, especially in their politico-economic circumstances for the past decades. These countries have, throughout their long history, established friendly relations on some occasions and hostile relations on other occasions. Specifically in the first half of this century, Japanese colonialism created deep sorrows for the Chinese and Korean. Even though old grudges remain without full healing, governments and peoples of the three countries are trying now to open the upcoming 21st century by improving their relations in a progressive and cooperative way.

Education, in such an international context, has been regarded as the most effective way to enhance mutual understanding and to make better relationships. It seems to us that educators in the three countries have never felt so keenly the necessity of learning each other's system as now. Actually, fostering the new generation toward globalization has been included in the agenda of educational reform in all the three countries. Also,

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educators in the countries seem to agree that changing their people's attitude is prerequisite to system reformation.

The purpose of the present study is to conduct an international survey of educational consciousness among Koreans, Chineses, and Japaneses. For this purpose, elementary and secondary school students and their parents and teachers were given a set of survey questionnaires. This procedure has yielded an enormous array of cross-cultural information. In this article, however, we focused on the discussion of conceptual structures of education that may contribute to the different educational practice in the three countries.

This is the first study of it's kind in which the same research instrument was applied to compare the people's general idea of education in the three East Asian countries, while there have been a lot of studies which juxtapose for comparison the educational patterns of Korea, China, and Japan(Ignas and Corsini, 1981; Stevenson, Lee, and Stigler, 1986; Holmes and McLean, 1989; Tobin, Wu, and Davidson, 1989; Kobayashi, 1990; Cookson, Sadovnik, and Semel, 1992; Tu, 1996; Lee, 1998).

Educational consciousness is invisible and hard to structurize. Moreover, it is never easy to compare educational consciousness among peoples who have different languages and cultures. It, thus, has barely become the subject of crosscultural comparative research. Accordingly, this study is a new trial with its own possibilities and limitations.

Ⅱ. Educational Consciousness

In this article, we formulated two sets of criteria (ideological and topical) in which behavior and/or opinion indicators of educational consciousness could be categorized. These criteria worked as both heuristic and analytic frames for the study. Ideological criteria were divided according to the people's conceptual orientation toward better education, and topical criteria were classified according to the practical domains of education.

A. Ideological Criteria

Ideological criteria here consist of five dichotomous conceptual orientations: open vs closed, autonomous vs regulative, elitist vs populist, intrinsic vs extrinsic, achieved vs ascribed orientations. Items in the research questionnaire were formulated in accordance with these criteria.

Open vs. Closed

This dichotomy concerns how easily a person accepts new trends and changes. It also concerns whether opportunities are open to all or to some special groups. For this criterion, the research questionnaire asked the people's opinions on teaching English in elementary schools; on opening school facilities to the community; on the sexual segregation of students; on the possibility of substituting new instructional high-tech equipment for classroom teachers; on the role of schooling (traditional vs. innovative); on the establishment of special institutions for teacher education (e.g., normal school or teachers' college).

Autonomous vs. Regulative

Educational consciousness in this criterion deals with who the major decision-maker of educational policies is, and on how much the power balance between the state and ordinary people is allowed in shaping educational policies. We asked, in the research questionnaire, people's opinions on controlling the publication of school textbooks (governmental vs. non-governmental); on the proportion of compulsory subjects and optional subjects; on the placement of students for public schools (i.e., on the possibility of parental choices).

Elitist vs. Populist

In the present research, elitism was conceived as the attitude orientation of the people to put the greater emphasis and investment on personal ability while populism was considered as the conceptual orientation that emphasizes social equity rather than social efficiency. As to this criterion, we asked the research subject's opinions on evaluating the students' academic achievement in top-down ranks; on dividing classes by students' academic levels; on grade-skipping for excellent students; grade-repeating for underachieving students; on the priority of the investment of educational budget to grade schools; on who should be the beneficiary of scholarships (high-achieving students vs. students in economic difficulties)

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic

The intrinsic and extrinsic value of education can be logically discernible, but hard to distinguish in practical situations. Educators usually distinguish them by defining the former as the logical implication of education itself, while the latter as its functional utility. In the questionnaire of this study, the following questions were asked of the subjects: what should be emphasized in the education during compulsory grade school years, either national development or self-realization of students; what should be the focus of school curricula, either the basic principles of the subjects or their practical

utilities in daily life.

Achieved vs. Ascribed

This dichotomy concerns the major factors that determine the social status of individuals in a society. In the achievement-oriented society, consideration is given to individual merits such as aptitude, ability, personality, knowledge, and etc. In the ascription-oriented society, consideration is given to family backgrounds, natal heritage, and etc. For this dichotomy criterion, we asked the subject's opinions on the main contributory factors to social success and on the major determining factors to students' academic achievement.

B. Topical Criteria

Topical criteria include six topics of educational concern: goal of education, content of education, method of education, educational administration, teaching profession, and student behavior. Proper items for the research questionnaire were formulated according to these criteria.

Goal of Education

Goal of education is an answer to the question of "Why" for educational activities. It is specified both in the curriculum and in the instructional routines. In the present research, we asked the subject's opinions on the role of schooling; on the focus of school curricula; on the priority of the investment of educational budget to grade schools; on the focus of the teacher's role such as character building vs. academic advance.

Content of Education

Educational consciousness in this criterion concerns on "What" to teach in schools. In the questionnaire of this study, we asked the people's opinions on English education in elementary schools; on the desirable frequency of textbook renewal; on what teachers should do when they do not agree with the contents of the textbook.

Method of Education

This is an answer to the question of "How-to" for the educational practice. For this criterion, the research questionnaire asked the subject's opinions on homework; the proportion of compulsory subjects and optional subjects; on the sexual segregation of students; on evaluating the student academic achievement in top-down ranks; on

dividing classes by students' academic levels; on grade-skipping for excellent students and grade-repeating for underachieving students; on corporal punishments by the teacher.

Educational Administration

This topic deals with the people's consciousness on how to manage or direct the affairs of educational institutions. It is closely connected with educational system reformation. In the present research, we specifically asked the people's opinions on the length of compulsory schooling; on the priority of the investment of educational budget to grade schools; on opening school facilities to the community; on controlling the publication of school textbooks; on the parental assistance in classroom instruction; on the parental contribution to school finance.

Teaching Profession

This section was meant to reveal how people of the three countries conceive teaching as a profession. Concerning this criterion, we asked the research subject's opinions on what characteristics are required to be a good teacher; on the teacher morality; on the teacher's socioeconomic status; on the teacher's contribution to the society; on the teacher's teaching and guiding abilities; on the teacher's sense of commitment to education; on the establishment of special institutions for teacher education (e.g., normal school or teachers' college).

Student Behavior

In the schooling context, the teacher is usually recognized as a socialization agent, whereas the student is considered as a socialization client. However, the actual relationship between the teacher and the student may widely differ with societies. Therefore, we needed a crosscultural comparison of both the teacher's perception on the student behavior and the student's conception on the teacher behavior. In the present research, we specifically asked such questions as what makes the students serious and worried; what is the most problematic behavior of the students; what are the major contributory factors to the students' academic achievement.

Ⅲ. Research Methods

A. Sample

Data for this study come from an international sample of school children and their teachers and parents in Korea, China, and Japan. Over five thousand subjects in each country were selected through multi-stage probability sampling methods. At first, the 5th-, the 8th-, and the 11th-grade classrooms in one city and in one rural town for each country were selected. And then, students in the classroom and their teachers and parents were selected as the research subjects for the present study. In the case of Korea, Seoul and Koesan County were chosen, the latter of which is a rural town located in the central part of the Korean peninsula. Several factors led to these choices, the most important being that the residents of these two area tended to show both the demographic representativeness and the possible longitudinal trend accompanying the process of urbanization. Japanese and Chinese subjects were also selected following the same principles. The Japanese city that we chose as being most comparable to Seoul was Tokyo. Peking was the Chinese city that was most feasible for conducting our research, in terms of language, size, and other factors. This procedure resulted in the total respondents of 11,491 from three countries(Table 1).

<Table 1> Sample of the parents, teachers, and students from three countries

(unit: person)

Subjects	Total	Korea			China			Japan		
		Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Total	**11,491**	**3,029**	**1,586**	**4,615**	**2,593**	**1,427**	**4,020**	**1,203**	**1,653**	**2,856**
Parent	**2,148**	571	289	860	451	319	770	196	322	518
Teacher	**5,028**	1,335	745	2,080	1,122	657	1,779	439	730	1,169
Student	**4,315**	1,123	552	1,675	1,020	451	1,471	568	601	1,169

B. International Cooperation

For the comparative study, one of the major educational research institutes of each country participated and cooperated: the Education Research Institute at Seoul National University(ERI-SNU) in Korea; the Institute for Education Research at Beijing Normal

University(IER-BNU) in China; and the Institute of Education at the University of Tsukuba(IE-UT) in Japan. ERI-SNU has taken the role of coordinator by producing and translating research instruments, guiding the questionnaire survey in the three countries, and opening an international conference for the crosscultural interpretation of the research result. For their own research procedure, IER-BNU and IE-UT have used translated versions of the same survey questionnaire that ERI-SNU has developed.

Comparative studies are, in nature, hindered by the lack of culturally fair research instruments (Armer and Grimshaw, 1973). So it was necessary for the ERI-SNU to invite a team of bilingual researchers from the three countries. The team has worked as the interpreter in international communicative situations and contributed to eliminating, as much as possible, any cultural bias throughout the whole research procedure. Carefully written instructions in all the three languages and personal contacts with the field investigators helped to make, as much as possible, the present survey cross-culturally comparable.

C. Data Analysis

The initial step in the analysis consisted of processing the data into the statistical frequency distribution tables. It was followed by comparisons of the responses by children, parents, and teachers of the three countries in which we conducted our research. Testing for significance of differences was not employed. Analysis of educational consciousness was based on the application of the two sets of criteria mentioned above.

For further interpretation of the research results, researchers from the three countries opened an international conference in Seoul on 19-21 August, 1998. In this conference, participants together examined minutely the statistical frequency distribution tables one by one, and presented their own analyses of the responses given by the subjects from the three countries. Also they exchanged background information to produce more rich and appropriate interpretations of the findings which would be discussed in the proper sections below.

IV. Findings

The educational consciousness in Korea, China and Japan was analyzed in the following two aspects: 1) in each country, differences in educational consciousness between urban and rural area were analyzed by different groups and then analyzed by countries; 2) educational consciousness in the three countries was compared based on

different viewpoints on education in accordance with the analytical model that was established at the outset of this study. For the first comparison, the theoretical frequency was calculated based on the premise that there is no difference in educational consciousness between groups and regions of the three countries and then it was compared with the actual frequency to obtain χ^2 value. The homogeneity test was followed by using the obtained value. Items which showed a difference in χ^2 test, distribution of responses were reviewed and analyzed in detail in this chapter. The statistical significance test was conducted at the 5% level.

A. General Differences in Educational Consciousness

The following <Table 2> shows the homogeneity indexes in the educational consciousness of the respondents by country. As shown in the Table, the relative homogeneity in parent, teacher and student groups is the highest in Japan, the lowest in China, with Korea in between. By group, homogeneity in the teacher group is higher than that of the other groups, and the homogeneity in the student group is the lowest.

<Table 2> The homogeneity indexes in the educational consciousness of the respondents by country

Classification	Korea			China			Japan		
	Parent	Teacher	Student	Parent	Teacher	Student	Parent	Teacher	Student
Number of items (A)	44	45	28	44	45	28	44	45	28
Number of items with no significant differences (B)	21	35	10	10	16	4	35	32	12
Homogeneity indexes B/A×100 (percent)	47.7	77.8	35.7	22.7	35.6	14.3	79.6	71.1	42.9

* no significant differences between urban and rural area at the 5% level.

Specifically speaking, Japanese parents, both in urban and rural area, show very few differences in viewpoints in 8 questions out of 10. This forms a remarkable contrast with the other two countries where the homogeneity indexes are relatively low. Of the three groups, the teacher group collectively shows the highest homogeneity : the index is higher than 70% in Korea and Japan and about 36% in China, which is much higher than that of the parent and student groups in China. The homogeneity index is, on the other hand, markedly lower in the student groups than in the parent and teacher groups. The index in the student group is 43% in Japan, 36% in Korea and only 14% in China.

High homogeneity means that there are few differences between urban and rural

areas in basic values and norms, opportunities of life, living conditions, lifestyle and educational environment. The difference in homogeneity index in Korea, therefore, seems to have something to do with the progress of industrialization, urbanization and modernization, which Japan and Korea have pursued so far and China is now pressing towards. Industrialization and modernization have broken down traditional values and norms and given birth to new values centering around cities. In this context, parents in Japan show a high homogeneity as they share modern, urbanized values and standards, while Korea is in the middle of a change, and rural-community based traditional values and standards are still prevalent in China.

Considering the fact that a specific level of education and qualifications are required to be a teacher and that there is no difference in the qualifications between the cities and the rural areas, it is easily understood that the homogeneity index is high in the teacher group. Low homogeneity among students seems to result from broad, lingering differences between the urban and rural areas in students lives, educational opportunities, and economic abilities although the social, cultural, and economic gaps between the urban and rural areas have been narrowed.

B. Differences in Educational Consciousness on Specific Issues

1. Open vs. Closed

The openness here includes spatial openness as well as openness in organization and content of education. Spatial openness includes the openness in its narrow sense that beyond the physical boundaries of schools, facilities and space of schools are shared with community, and the openness in its broader sense that the content and resources of education are shared and exchanged with other countries. The openness of organization and content of education means participation of parents and general public in the management of schools and implementation of education and, further, the belief that the major role of education is the creation of a new order rather than the upholding of traditions. In this study, questions related to the openness of education system were asked concerning: early English education, co-education, publishers of textbooks, method of teacher training, extension of elective subjects, interval of curricular revision, participation of parents, and opening of school facilities.

Regarding early English education, most of the respondents in the three countries were in favor of the idea, with the rate of approval the highest in China. Parents are most favorable to the early English education, followed by students and then teachers. Korean teachers expressed a strong approval for early English education. Specifically,

the rate of approval is about 90% among Chinese parents, about 81% among Japanese parents and 77% Korean parents. As for the teachers, the rate of approval is 84% in China, 66% in Japan and 48% in Korea. As for the students, the rate of approval is about 89% in China, about 65% in Korea and 63% in Japan.

The rate of approval of early English education shows a clear difference between the urban and rural area. While the rate of approval of the three groups in urban areas is about 10% higher than that of the rural counterparts in China, the reverse is true in Korea and Japan. High approval on early English education in China is caused by the conversion of a socialist economic system to a market economy since 1990s and the following increase in international trade and demand for those who can speak English. Those who are fluent in English can find decent employment with higher pay, and this advantage has triggered a national interest in English education. The lower rate of approval in rural areas, versus that of urban areas in China, reflects that the contact with foreigners, need for English, and opportunity to be exposed to information in the changing world are very limited in actual rural lives.

In Korea and Japan, the rate of approval is high as English is becoming an essential requirement for employment. The more direct reason in these countries, however, seems to be the importance of English in the entrance examination of universities and colleges. Contrary to the result in China, the rate of approval in Korea and Japan is higher in the rural areas. This is because in rural Korea and Japan the opportunity for early English education is limited and the reliance upon schools is higher, while early English education is available in urban areas at private institutes. The low rate of approval of early English education by teachers in Japan and Korea is partially related to poor school facilities, overcrowded classes, and lack of language labs and partially because of the concern of teachers about their ability to teach English, as elementary school teachers have been trained to teach all subjects and have not specialized in English.

Most of the respondents in the three countries agreed on co-education. The approval is the highest among Japanese parents, followed by Chinese and Korean parents. The approval is the lowest in Korea in all three groups. The approval is high in all three countries despite the traditional Confucianism culture which stresses separation between male and female as a basic virtue, because the elimination of the separation between male and female has been an important target of social reform in the course of modernization in the three countries. The approval is relatively lower in Korea than in China and Japan. This reflects that Korean society is more conservative than Chinese and Japanese societies on the issue of male-female relationship and that most of the prestigious middle and high schools with a long history in Korea have not adopted co-education.

As for the cycle of textbook revisions, the majority of parents and teachers polled in the three countries responded that revisions should be as often as possible. Frequent revisions of textbooks are technically difficult and may act adversely against the continuity and consistency of education from primary to secondary education. Textbooks, traditionally, were not subjected to frequent changes as they were mainly based on common cultural traditions and scientifically verified theories and principles. High approval on frequent revisions, therefore, may reflect that a view that the current education system is not responding to rapid social changes.

As for the proportion of required subjects and of elective subjects in high schools, most of the parents and teachers in the three countries want more elective subjects. In China, there were no elective subjects in high schools before 1990s, and electives were introduced in 1990s. Korea and Japan have some elective subjects. From the students' point of view, however, they do not have the freedom of choice in selecting subjects. For example, each school has its own preassigned secondary foreign language and students have no choice but to accept the language course selected by the school. Under this condition, students have an increased load of learning, and due to a number of subjects, in-depth study is unachievable in all subjects. The high approval on the increased portion of elective subjects must be understood in this context.

As for the consent on parents' participation in school education, the rate of approval shows broad variations depending on the issues. The approval for participation in school events and students' discipline is high, followed by the invitation of principals and teachers and school finances. The approval was the lowest on the participation in examinations. Depending on the issues, the opinions of parents and of teachers differ. Teachers are relatively negative to the participation of parents in examinations and recruitment of principals and teachers, while parents are negative to the participation in school finances.

Respondents in China are relatively positive to the participation of parents in school education; respondents in Japan are negative, and those in Korea have the opinion somewhere in the middle. This must be understood in line with various factors such as educational environments, educational climate, concept on desirable parents and on school education, values of parents, entrance examinations and other social screening systems, etc. Parents in Japan have long thought that it is only natural that parents do not participate actively in school education, as they have believed that school education is the responsibility of teachers and school finances the responsibility of local authorities. In Japan, PTAs participated by parents are limited to some school activities such as athletic meetings, and it is customary that parents do not intervene in any other activities. This is why the parents in Japan are more positive to the participation in school events and activities, when compared to those in Korea and China.

In Korea, on the other hand, parents have been heavily involved in school education,

both formally and informally. This is due to the hectic competition for entrance into universities and the chronic lack of finances for public education. There have been quite a few parents who have been willing to provide financial support to improve the education of the schools where their children attend, and the authorities have worked to open official channels to enable the parents to do so. That is why the opinion of parents that financial support to school is necessary is much higher in Korea than in China and Japan.

China is in a similar situation with Korea, in that parents are highly interested in their children's educational advance and in school finances. However, in China teachers are more highly trusted by the public than in Korea. Then, how do we understand that more Chinese parents and teachers believe in the participation of parents in examinations, student discipline, and recruitment of principals and teachers than those in Korea and Japan? This seems to indicate that those polled in China believe that parents and school authorities should establish cooperative companionship in its best sense.

As for the opening of school facilities to communities, the respondents in Korea and Japan are positive, while those in China are negative. Parents and teachers in Korea and Japan show a high approval of 80%, while the rate of approval in China is less than 40%. Although the low rate in China is partially attributed to the traditional Chinese concept that schools are a sanctuary, the more direct cause is the lack of funds for education, which keeps schools from opening school facilities, for fear of damages to school facilities. It should be noted, however, that a considerable number of those polled in China agree on the opening of school facilities. Although not a majority now, they will be the driving force for the opening of school facilities and education systems to the public.

As for the idea that prospective teachers must be trained in Teacher's college or normal college, the approval by parents and teachers was over 80% in Korea and China, while the parents in Japan about 63% and teachers in Japan about 34%, showed a stark contrast. In all three countries, those who view that teachers must be trained at professional schools for teacher training are much more than those who have the opposite opinion. This is because they believe that teachers should have not only deep understanding on their major disciplines and high morality, but also have a good command of teaching methodologies. Lower approval in Japan is based on the fact that relatively more teachers in Japan are not from colleges of education or teacher's college and also on the social awareness that the teachers from general colleges and universities have a deeper understanding on their major disciplines.

Regarding the answers to the question "Which is the most important role of school education: social reform and creating of new orders, or preserving of traditional culture and maintaining of social order?" parents and teachers in China prefer reforms, while parents in Japan and Korea are for traditions. Students in Korea, however, are

reform-oriented just as those in China, while the students in Japan are tradition-oriented. For the last 20 years, China has made marvelous accomplishments in economy, politics, society, science, technology, culture, education, and etc. Stimulated by these accomplishments, Chinese has come to see the need for continuous reform, and they have a high expectation for education, which they think drives reform. Reaching the limit of high economic growth, Japan has had to undergo various restructuring to remove the bubbles from economy. Through the course of this change, many Japanese have lost confidence in the future and suffered from chaos and frustration. Amid westernization since the World War Ⅱ, traditional culture and Japanese characteristics have become appealing to vast majority of Japanese. This seems to explain why social reform and creation of new order are the most important role of education is the highest in China and the lowest in Japan.

Those in Korea, following closely the parents and students in China, value the role of education for social reform. The rate of approval by Korean teachers on this role is the lowest among the three countries. This may indicate that many teachers are concerned about and afraid of ongoing reform, including the shortened service years of teachers, acknowledged existence of multiple teachers' unions, differential remuneration based on performance evaluation, and etc.

2. Autonomous vs. Regulative

Whether the parents, teachers and students in the three countries prefer self-decision or decision of the government on selection of education institutions, operation of schools and implementation of education is studied under this heading. For this, questions were given on the following issues: What is the desirable attitude of teachers when the textbook conflicts with their idea? Who should choose the schools for compulsory education? and Who should publish the textbooks for institutions which provide compulsory education programs? With regard to the question on the discretion of teachers, more than half of those polled in China and Japan answered that teachers must follow the textbooks, while the approval rate of teachers on this issue in Korea is less than half of that in China and Japan. The approval of parents is the lowest in Korea.

<Table 3> Desirable teacher's attitude when the textbook conflicts with their idea

(unit: %)

Classification	Korea		China		Japan	
	Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher	Parent	Teacher
Urban						
She should follow the textbook	58.2	49.5	71.2	68.5	67.6	58.3
She can teach by his own idea	41.8	50.5	28.8	31.5	30.4	40.7
Rural						
She should follow the textbook	52.7	46.8	59.7	54.7	72.1	62.6
She can teach by his own idea	47.3	53.2	40.3	45.3	27.9	37.4

This issue has something to do with the trust in teachers and objectivity and completeness of textbooks. In Korea, parents in rural areas with less education show higher respect and trust in teachers. In addition, many believe that textbooks, containing universal knowledge, have the highest authority. Parents in rural areas in China and Korea strongly uphold the idea that teachers should be trusted for education. This indicates their higher respect and trust in teachers. The rate of parents and teachers polled in Korea who view that the teacher's ideas should be respected is much higher than those in China and Japan. This is somehow related to the fact that those with power in the past bureaucratic societies distorted historical facts in textbooks, and forced their ideology and opinion in order to justify and extend their rulership. The responses are also indicative of the loosening of the central control over school education and strengthened position of teachers in the course of democratization of education, and the importance of textbooks has diminished, as the access to various information through computer networks has become easier.

In China, where textbooks are published according to the uniform central plans, and free interpretation of textbooks by teachers has been extremely limited, a considerable number of parents answered that parents should put their trust in teachers' discretion. This means that school education in China is radically changing. This has been caused by the new textbook policy of the new education plan, which has been implemented since 1992. This policy allows teachers to choose from a selection of textbooks and to teach students in a way they creatively invent apart from the textbooks, within the given time limits.

As for the question on who should choose the institutions for compulsory education, teachers' opinions are divided into the two: the choice is up to parents; and the selection should be done by the authorities. No significant difference is manifested between countries and regions in all countries. But among parents there were a

significant difference. Most of the Japanese parents prefer their own choice, while parents in Korea and China want the local authority to assign their children to a school. Japanese parents in urban area are most favorable to personal choice, followed by those in China. Korean parents are least favorable to personal choice. With regard to the parents in rural areas, Japanese show the highest preference for personal choice, followed by those in Korea and China.

The assignment of schools by authorities is highly favored by the parents in rural areas of Korea and China. This is due to the fact that, in rural areas, there are not many schools and therefore the distance between school and home is fairly long, limiting the choice of schools. Parents in rural areas who want to choose schools on their own think that they can choose better schools than those selected by the local authorities if the choice is given to them. The same is true with parents in urban areas.

Designation of schools by authority presupposes that at least the educational facilities, quality of teachers, and learning ability of students are equalized in all schools. However, there are big difference among schools in reality. Therefore, the parents who have no chance for their children to be assigned to a good school and the parents who are willing to pay extra money to provide better education for their children want to choose a school on their own.

With regard to the question on whether the government should have absolute or partial control over the publication of textbooks for compulsory education or if it should be trusted to the private sector, more than half of the parents and teachers in the three countries, regardless of their geographic classifications, answered that the government should publish the textbooks. The rate of support on the publication by governments, however, shows great variation depending on the countries. The rates of parents who preferred the publication by the government were 92%, highest, in China, 74% in Korea and 65% in Japan.[1] The order of preference is the same among teachers. The preference is also lower in urban than in rural areas.

The preference of parents and teachers in the three countries on the government

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1) Kadowaki Atsushi, a co-researcher in Japan, argues that, technically speaking,Japan combines government and private publication, since the late 1950s, under the principle of 'private publication and inspection by the government', the textbooks are inspected for their scope, degree, quantity, and accuracy, indications and expressions and then they may be used as textbooks only after having been qualified by inspection. This means that the selectable answers to the applicable question should contain the third possible answer "A combination of the governmental and private publication" as well as the existing answers : ① government publication, and ② private publication. In fact, Korea's policy is similar to that of Japan. It must be viewed, therefore, that the respondents understood the meaning of the 'government publication' in the sense that the government has absolute and partial control over the textbook publication.

control over publication of textbooks is somewhat related to the textbook publication practices that have been in place in the three countries. Until 1988, under the planned economy, all the textbooks for primary and secondary school in China were published by the government. Since then, a number of textbooks were introduced to each subject and local authorities were allowed to publish textbooks under the inspection of the Ministry of Education. The dominant opinion, however, is that such textbooks published by local authorities still show standardized content with no distinguishing features. In other words, private publication of textbooks has long been unthinkable among respondents, and the alternative textbook policy did not turn out to have more merits and advantages. Therefore, most of the respondents in China favor the publication of textbooks by government.

There has been a strong control of the government over the textbook publication in Korea and Japan. In Korea, all the textbooks for elementary education were published by the government and most of the textbooks for secondary education were published by the private companies and then inspected by the Ministry of Education. In Japan, most of the textbooks for compulsory education were published by private companies, but they were inspected by the Ministry of Education, just like the textbooks for secondary education in Korea. It should be noted, however, that majority of the respondents in Korea and Japan favor the private publication of textbooks. This preference seems to stem from the critical viewpoint on the problems caused by the central control over textbooks. Standardized and centralized textbooks have various advantages : they narrow the regional gaps in the quality of education; they enhance the understanding of curricula on the part of teachers; they facilitate teachers' preparation for classes; and they provide standardized language and culture for integration of society. However, there have been some cases where a specific political group has forced its own interest or arguments as a national interest or as a uniform truth, and secondly, cultural, social and economic characteristics in each region of the country cannot be fully reflected in standardized textbooks. The high preference on private publication of textbooks is the result of the discussion on these problems and the alternative efforts.

Regarding the question on whether hi-tech media such as computers can replace the role of teachers, respondents in Korea are in general positive, while those in China and Japan are negative. Teachers are most negative to this question, followed by parents; students are relatively positive. The marked difference in the response depending on the countries is directly co-related to the different level of distribution and actual utilization of computers in the three countries. Although based on Chinese tradition, which values the role of teachers, the lowest positive answer in China is directly related to low distribution of computers. On the contrary, most of the students in Korea have and use

computers and schools and parents are actively promoting the use of computers. Although the distribution and utilization of computers in Japan are close to those in Korea, it seems that schools and parents are not as enthusiastic as those in Korea on the use of computers. Students show a higher preference on the replacement of teachers by computers than parents and teachers. This implies that they have a critical viewpoint against the current teaching methods of teachers and, at the same time, a faith in advanced media, such as computers.

3. Elitist vs. Populist

An elitist educational system emphasizes the difference between those who have high academic achievement and those who do not. On the other hand, popular education system emphasizes group similarity rather than differences, and it aims for the realization of equality through education. In this context, questions were asked on "Who should be the beneficiary of university education and scholarship programs?" and opinions were gathered on human resource training strategies for national development, the ranking students on the basis of school records, the organizing classes according to academic faculty, grade-skipping and repeating in education courses.

As for ranking students based on academic grades, the respondents in Japan are relatively positive, while those in Korea and China are negative. Among the three groups, teachers are the most negative and then students and parents. Formation of classes based on academic faculty was given negative responses: those in Japan are the most negative. Of the three groups, students' opposition is the strongest and then parents and teachers. Concerning the ranking of students based on academic faculty, those in Japan are the most negative to this type of class formation. As for the grade-skipping system, those in China are the most positive. Of the three groups, teachers are the most positive and students are the most negative. The responses to the repetition of courses for low academic results show a similar pattern.

Opening and differentiation of academic records are a matter of both educational principles and philosophy. From the viewpoint based on the education principles, ability grouping must be more effective in teaching and learning than mixed grouping. The dilemma that the school education faces, however, is that such separation may be extended to the ranking of personality.

Respondents in China and Korea are negative to giving ranks to students based on academic records, while those in Japan are somewhat positive. The responses in Korea and China are co-related to the equality-oriented education policies in the two countries. China, based on the communist philosophy, alleviated excessive competition to enter

good universities and readjusted the education system that bent toward elitism and higher academic credits, allowing students to develop their talents. Korea, in order to normalize the school education which was absorbed in excessive competition, implemented non-exam entrance system for middle schools in 1969 and introduced a high school equalization policy in 1974. In order to alleviate the overheated competition in the college entrance examination, the Korean government prohibits marking students' ranks on the high school report cards and is pressing universities not to accept students on the basis of academic ranks. In Japan, where the ranking of students is relatively favored, a unique aspect of Japan, ranking and differentiation based on ability is seen as inevitable and provides the background for respondents opinions. This is contrasted with the climate in Korea where reforms on student screening systems eliminated the traditional elite schools and the reform is now spreading to universities. Unlike the ranking of students, the respondents in Japan were the most negative to the ability grouping. This may be caused by the concern that such grouping may result in a sense of unbelongingness.

In Japan, grade skipping and repetition is not allowed in compulsory education, although repetition of courses in high schools is instituted. Korea and China also do not allow grade skipping and repetition of courses. The high consent of respondents in China on grade skipping and repetition of courses reflects the strong yearning for reform in the current equality-oriented education system. Parents and teachers in Korea are more positive than those in Japan on grade skipping and repetition of courses. This reflects the problems embedded in the equality policy that Korean government has strongly pushed for so far. The equality policy could not satisfy academically superior students and the desire of parents to provide their children with better education even at more financial sacrifices. For example, due to the overcrowded classes, teachers can not provide separate instructions to meet the needs of academically superior students and students with low academic results. In this context, the Korean government has introduced science high schools and foreign language high schools and a grade skipping system to cultivate quality human resources for the national good and to supplement the equality based education system.

With regard to the question “Should college or university education be given to those who have the faculty to follow higher education or to anyone who wants higher education?" the three countries as a whole answered that higher education should be open to anyone. The viewpoint is the strongest in Korea, followed by Japan and China. Of the three groups, this viewpoint is the strongest in the student group. It is thought that what mainly determines the viewpoint on this question is the cooling-down system that adjusts the degree of universality of opportunity for higher education and the social promotion need. In Korea, more than 80% of the general high school graduates enter

colleges and universities. Not only secondary education but also higher education are already generalized in Korea. This extent of generalization of higher education in Korea exceeds that of Japan. The rate of respondents who view college education as being for everyone is the highest in Korea, as higher education is something natural and commonplace in Korea. Also, Koreans have a national consensus that, without a college diploma, one cannot find a decent job and can not be recognized, no matter how capable and hard-working one is. For this reason, most of the high school graduates think that they have to go for higher education, without giving deep thought to their ability and talents. Japan, on the other hand, has formed, relatively successfully, a social philosophy that doing one's best in one's field is more important than higher education, and this practice has cooled down the yearning for higher education to some degree.

In China, the enrollment ratio of colleges and universities is 6%. Under this circumstances, the argument that anyone who wants higher education should be able to enter colleges and universities is not acceptable. More than half of the respondents in China, however, think that higher education is for everyone. This is the echo of complaint against the current education system and foreshadows a reform movement as the respondents reveal a momentum in leading the expansion of opportunity for higher education in China.

Concerning the question, “Should the focus be placed on the cultivation of elites or on the improvement of public education?" most of the parents, teachers and students polled in the three countries responded that the focus should be placed on the improvement of public education. This is a proof that the educational system in the three countries is based fundamentally on the public interest. More respondents in Korea supported the cultivation of elites than those in other countries. This indicates that Koreans are critical about the current equalization policy that it cannot cultivate high-quality human resources, and it supports the argument that systematic institutions should be established by the government to provide differentiated education to academically superior students.

Although excessive equality is also criticized in Japan, Japan has the highest rate of respondents supporting the public interest in education. This seems to stem from the settled value in Japan on elites that “outstanding plumbers are better than a smattering of philosophers."[2)]

Regarding the question, “Should scholarship be given to those who have higher academic accomplishments or those who suffer from the lack of finances?" China shows the highest rate of response that it should be given to those with high academic

2) The responses in Japan need to be interpreted with the awareness of the translation of the word 'elites' in the questionnaire. In the Japanese questionnaire, the word 'elites' was rendered as "great people". Because 'elites' and 'great people' are not identical, this should be considered in the interpretation of the responses.

achievements, and the student group shows the lowest support.

Most of the respondents in Korea and Japan say that scholarships should be given to those who lack finances for schooling, while those in China claimed that it must be given to the students with higher academic records. China has provided scholarship to students with high academic records and loans to the financially difficult students. Unlike the parents and teachers, most of the students in China responded that the scholarship should be given to the students who need financial support, as many of the students feel burdened in the competition to get scholarships and think that the methods of valuing academic achievements, which determine “good students," are not always scientific.

The question, "How many of your current students do you think will be elites or prominent people?" was given to teachers. According to the answers, the egalitarian viewpoint is the strongest among Japanese teachers, second among Chinese teachers, and third amongst Koreans. The answers are greatly influenced by the teachers' viewpoint on who the prominent people are. In a society where there is no discrimination between jobs and where it is a common sense that there are top experts in any occupations, people will not think that there are only a few elites or prominent people. On the contrary, in a society where only a few win in the hectic competition toward very limited positions of reputation, power and wealth are regarded for elites and the argument that every job is equally valuable and that there are experts in any fields of occupations is not be convincing. The former value is stronger in Japan and China, while the latter is still stronger in Korea. The responses from the three countries should be interpreted with this background in mind. In a society where the egalitarian value is prevalent, people will think that they can realize their dreams through their efforts, though they are not admitted into prestigious universities. In a society where the elitism is prevailing, the students who fail to enter elite colleges or universities may think that their lives as failures. A high rate of response among teachers in Korea that only a limited number can be elites indicates the viewpoint that the admission into prestigious colleges and universities determines whether a student will be an elite or not.

4. Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic

In order to find out whether parents, teachers and students weigh intrinsic values or extrinsic values more in the three countries, the following two questions were designed. The first question is related to the purpose of the school education: “Should school education focus on the cultivation of human resources for national development or should it be for self-realization?" Most of the parents, teachers, and students in Japan and Korea think that the priority should be on the realization of self, while those in

China prioritize national development.

Under the communist rule, China has always stressed the country or group rather than individuals. That is why the rate of the respondents, who think that school education should be for growing human resources for the development of the country, is the highest in China. A considerable number of respondents in China, however, answered that self fulfillment is the purpose of school education and this viewpoint is most prevalent in the student group. This provides evidence that China is deviating from the current standardized and collective values and a new climate, where personality is respected and independency and creativity of individuals are stressed, is being formed.

The second question is, “Should the school curricula emphasize basic principles of studies or practicality in daily life?" As for this question, parents, teachers and students in Korea, teachers and students in China and students in Japan support the practical knowledge, while the parents in China and the teachers in Japan go for basic principles. Parents in Japan are divided equally into two different viewpoints.

Since the Chosun Dynasty, Korea has the tradition where “the discussion of meaningless knowledge" has been rejected and “practical knowledge" valued. Today, a dominant tendency in Korea is that knowledge not related to real life is useless. A rapid decrease in the number of college students majoring in pure sciences reflects this wide-spread viewpoint. The general public believe that the pure sciences are of little use in actual daily lives and do not help one find a job after graduation, and academic success in basic studies, especially in math, physics, philosophy and history, is only for the genius types. Popularization of universities and opening of majors for various technologies and skills that are needed in the modern society are also indicative of this trend.

Traditionally, the Chinese think that school curriculum should not include things related to actual life. For the last 40 years, China has emphasized basic knowledge and the structure of knowledge. Good command of such knowledge has determined the success in various tests and exams. Most of the students, however, oppose basics-oriented education. The main reason why students object to the principle-oriented education is because it is hard to understand and less interesting as it deals with abstract ideas.

5. Achieved vs. Ascribed

In order to discover peoples' idea on whether achieved factors or ascribed factors have more influence on success, the question, “On what factor do you think success in the society depends?" was designed. The choices include ① industriousness and sincerity, ② knowledge and skills, ③ education, ④ socio-economic status of parents, ⑤

physical conditions (health and appearance), and ⑥ connections (geographic connection, connections from schooling, blood connections). In the analysis of the responses, the first 3 choices are integrated into achieved factors and the last 2 choices (except physical conditions) are classified as an ascribed factors.

As shown in the following <Table 4>, respondents in the three countries think that social success depends upon achieved factors rather than on ascribed factors. This tendency is the strongest in Japan, followed by China and then Korea.

The ratio of respondents believing that the success depends upon achieved factors is an index indicating the level of modernization, rationality of social reward systems and objectiveness of criteria. In this context, Japan is exemplary. Clear separation of private and public life and a settled monitoring system which does not allow corruption and operation of private connection are some of the major factors. China also prioritizes achieved factors. The Science promotion policy, a high level of knowledge, various exams and tests which take skills and ability as the criteria of screening, and numberless cases of success under the newly introduced market economy drive respondents to put a priority on achieved factors.

<Table 4> The respondents' opinion toward the most influential factors on success in life by groups, regions, and countries

(unit: %)

Respondents	Korea		China		Japan	
	Achieved	Ascribed	Achieved	Ascribed	Achieved	Ascribed
Parent	71.8	28.2	91.0	9.0	93.4	6.6
Urban	70.8	29.2	91.1	8.9	92.9	7.1
Rural	73.7	26.3	90.9	9.1	93.8	6.2
Teacher	54.6	45.4	77.3	22.7	90.2	9.8
Urban	54.4	45.6	82.8	17.2	91.9	8.1
Rural	50.9	45.1	69.2	30.8	89.2	10.8
Student	76.7	23.3	91.9	8.9	95.0	5.0
Urban	74.2	25.8	92.2	7.8	95.5	4.5
Rural	81.8	18.2	88.8	11.2	94.5	5.5

On the other hand, respondents in Korea show that Korea still suffers from serious regional antagonism and that the geographic origin of those with political power determines the nomination of high-ranking officials in government and the supportive policy to businesses. A considerable number of teachers in Korea view that parents'

positive support is necessary for high academic achievements of their children. “Positive support" here means parents' spending extra money to provide their children with additional private studies and tutoring. This perception of the teachers seems to contribute to the high ratio of teachers who view that success depends on ascribed factors.

V. Summary and conclusions

In this project, the homogeneity of educational consciousness between urban and rural areas in the three countries was studied. The homogeneity is the highest in Japan, next is Korea and the lowest is China. Modernization, industrialization and urbanization have broken down traditional norms and values that were based on traditional rural society and caused a homogeneity that is based on new modern values and norms. The degree of homogeneity is in proportion to the progress of modernization and industrialization.

Also, this study established five criteria in order to analyze perception on education: “open vs. closed", “autonomous vs. regulative", “elitist vs. populist", “intrinsic vs. extrinsic", and “achieved vs. ascribed". Attitudes or consciousness is a product of historical and social situations that a country finds itself in. Although the macro historical and social situations are identical, the micro situations of social groups within a society may vary. Because of this, a consistent analysis of educational consciousness in terms of historical and social context is difficult.

Considering the features of educational consciousness in the three countries, with this difficulty in analysis in mind, the educational consciousness in the three countries is generally open, autonomy-oriented, public-oriented and toward achievements. Most respondents in China still take central control as something natural and view the important role of education for promoting national interest. The respondents in China are quite open and innovative and are filled with confidence and desire in their new educational system and building of a new country. The respondents in Japan have a high homogeneity in educational consciousness among parents, teachers, and students, and show consistency and stability in their viewpoints as newly settled modern systems and practices have been solidified and internalized. In most questions, Koreans have viewpoints that are somewhere in between the viewpoints of those of Chinese and Japanese. A marked difference is that there are relatively more teachers in Korea, when compared to the teachers in China and Japan, who are entrapped in old frame of thinking.

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