

Two drastically different social ideals seen in education systems

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The manufacturing of the most useful weapon in the modern world varies from place to place after thousands of years of separation between cultures, specifically the East and the West. This weapon would be knowledge in information in school subjects and the ability to harness the full mind capacity. Education is one of the most prominent components of life that many experience, while how you acquired the information being different depending on where you lived in the world. Acknowledging the creation of thoughts and ideas while achieving a further understanding for concepts are highly valued in the US system of education.

On the opposite side of the equation, the Korean and Japanese system values test scores and being able to recite the information rather than being able to understand it on a teachable level. However, despite the fact that these countries, Korea and Japan, are scoring much higher in the PISA tests, compared to students who learn in the American style education (BBC), these students also tend to experience high levels of stress leading to suicidal thoughts and excess stress. Perhaps the education systems adapted by the East Asian style schools are not exactly preparing the students for the future world. The world has finally reached a point in time where 86% of the world population is literate (100), therefore many reading this probably hold the memory of devoting a monstrous portion of time dedicated for formal education as of now. Assignment after assignment being handed out like someone was shooting fire arrows as you as a target may be what you felt some of your teachers were doing. Attempting to achieve the perfect balance of completing the assignments while coping with stress may be some of the indestructible memories of your school life.

In an extreme situation, a study conducted by the country of Japan, suggests that more than 18, 000 children have committed suicide in the last 30 years. As well as continuing to be the leading cause of death for young adults passing away in Japan for the past few years (Lu). Near Mount. Fuji, there is a place called "suicide forest." Many people come here for tourist destinations, but there are also paths that are theoretically banned to be entered, but people still reluctantly enter this forest to commit suicide. A geologist who studies the area found about 100 human bodies while exploring the forest.

The nightmare that is this problem had gotten so significant that there is a sign planted into the mountain to remind people of their family to prevent them from committing suicide (Vice. "Suicide"). One of the most prevalent places to commit suicide in Korea is the Han River. Measures have been taken upon to prevent this phenomenon where telephones connected to counseling provide comfort to in order to convince the people to not take their life away (Vice "On"). UPI, a news publishing site that covers various topics upon international news announced that "7.8 per 100, 000" people in Korea took their own life away, as well as 8% of people "contemplated suicide" in 2014 (Shim).

Later in the article they mention that students in Korea have received great "pressure to get top marks in school were behind the chronic stress they experienced in their daily lives, with more than 60 percent saying they suffered from school-related stress"(Shim). This is able to communicate to the rest of the world about the importance of getting a sturdy formal

education in the society of Korea. However, it also hints that the competition for being able to participate the most elite education possible is getting to a point where it directly harms the health of the students at an exceptionally significant level. For the 2 countries to take such serious measures upon the problem of suicide in young adults suggests that the leading stress-causing catalyst would be school, and the countries are very aware of it. When I temporarily attended a Japanese middle school, I was required to have textbooks for every single class for what the teachers there called, “to be able to follow the curriculum.” In reality, it was all lies.

It wasn't for the curriculum since you could easily get away with only paying some attention to the teacher while they only talked on and on about all of the information they presented on the chalkboard. These textbooks could not be perceived as an actual textbook in my eyes, and more like a collection of the astounding amount of information that the students needed to drill temporarily into their minds in order to pass the tests. The school was handing out memorizing information-filled sheets cleverly disguised as a textbook and measured their intelligence upon the student's ability to memorize the information. The motto of the school could have been, “Memorize! The More Information You Have, The Better Your Score! Failing Isn't an Option!” by the amount of times the word “Memorize” was indirectly mentioned in class. This one class of Science was one of the most questionable teaching methods that the Japanese system presented. The class of Science would reach its peak level of being enjoyable by providing an event that would allow you to test your predictions with a real life experiment.

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It is one of the only events that students admit to look forward to. The teacher explained the procedure and foundation knowledge of the experiment and wrote on the chalkboard at the speed of light while we, the students, struggled to keep up with copying it down into our notebooks. So far, the exact same system of introducing the experiment compared to an American style school, except for the platform the writing took place upon. Right after, we were commanded to open the science textbook, and the statement that came out of the teacher's mouth were the results and implications of the experiment long before we even formulated a hypothesis. At that exact moment, I was willing to go as far as breaking the strict social norms of Japan to inform the teacher the the purpose of the experiment was to get a further understanding of the concept through correlating the evidence from the experiment to an idea. To escalate this phenomenon that would destruct the creativity of the students, the teacher started to demonstrate the experiment.

We weren't working with acid or radioactive elements, and the past years of being in an elementary science class already exceedingly enforced the correct use of alcohol lamps and gas burners. At this point, I really wanted to address my opinions about this directly to the teacher, but not to my surprise, the teacher started to write the hypothesis on the chalkboard. None of the students were objecting upon the ridiculous fact that our ability to hypothesize was being stripped from our rights. Finally, as if there was even the point of doing the experiment anymore, the experiment was finally conducted. This science experiment was more like a review upon how to use basic classroom materials rather than what it was actually intended to be.

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Peering into the teaching methods that the Japanese school uses, we are clearly able to tell that their system of education is more upon “memorizing” (all of the information the students need to have acquaintance with in the year) rather than “understanding” the information. The paper cut that came from the science class deepened further into a bruise as the school transitioned into the end of semester tests. Not only is the main skill to achieving success in these tests memorization, but they are also the main competitor on your report card. As soon as the transitions begin, it is as if the school had gotten into a much, much stiffer atmosphere than it already was. Stress to get a good grade upon these tests was circulating through blood streams everyday for the people of the Japanese middle school.

No longer would teachers instruct you to memorize more information. No longer would you see students roaming the halls for a chance to talk to their friends in different classes because they can not even waste a second of time not preparing for their tests. Even if a great detective was able to identify a cluster of students talking, no longer would you find them discussing about their passions and hobbies. Instead, the precious gathering would be for the sole purpose of providing new information to each other to prepare for the test. As seen with the serious attitude the students have towards this final test, this is one of the many ways the Korean and Japanese school systems are able to pressure the students to develop a mindset that focuses on studying for the better of yourself. BBC measured the mathematical ability of one Korean high school with a test that included some questions that had come from a Welsh GCSE math exam.

The Welsh students who had participated reported that the test was quite challenging, but many of the Korean students had completed the exam under a quarter of the time as well as the teacher informing that the questions were studied in elementary school. Compared to the American system where many students admit to do homework at the last minute and only a fraction of them doing extra studies by their own choice, perhaps the Korean and Japanese education system is better at training the students to possess a mindset that is able to conduct learning easily. This would identify that the school systems for the Korean and Japanese education is slightly better than the American system. However, I think that these tests are completely unnecessary and are only able to measure the memorization skills of the student rather than provide them with actual real life skills used for later on in life. Take the project that we are progressing upon for the class of social studies.

Working in groups, all of the students are formulating a theatrical act consisting of the thinkers of the Enlightenment time period, complete with props and costumes to establish an atmosphere fit for the philosophers. This has the ability to allow students to apply the information they have learned in class into a project that requires creativity and skills. This has a much better chance of being used in the future world compared to memorizing lists and lists of information like the Korean and Japanese systems of education. This is because by being creative in the workfield, you are able to establish a skill that sets you aside from the others which may increase your salary as well as success. The tests are only able to determine if the student knows

the information mentioned in class and nothing else. Not the mental capacity of the student or the amount creativity they possess.

What the Korean and Japanese systems of education have the ability to do is to provide numerous memories where the students had so much pressure upon themselves that they became a literal place mat for their own stress. This work ethic of pouring in an abundance of effort to get the finest results is further addressed in the real world. The company that you are hired at as well as your salary largely depends on what is written on your resume and not your actual ability to accomplish the skill that is necessary for the occupation. Although it isn't the test scores this time, your effort can be measured by how many hours of unpaid labour, or "zangyou" you participate in. Zangyou is simply a part of your theoretically optional schedule, but you are pressured to stay and attempt to put on an act that you are still continuing to accomplish something. If you choose to take the logical action of not participating in it, not only would it seem like you are slacking yourself off of some tasks, (even if you have already completed the necessary assignments) but it would also resemble being disrespectful to the higher authorities where they are working but you aren't.

All of this has already lead to somewhat of a strict and rigid society that is only able to extend the ideas of others instead of creating new ideas. To exterminate this problem, we must attack it from the core, and resolve the strict school system that Korea and Japan holds. Education is a system that is present everywhere, formal and informal, and it is the refined way of transferring knowledge to people of the next generation. Perhaps not

completely destructing the structure, but revising it so that it becomes a place where students are actually benefiting from the school rather than schools being factories that make high-scoring machines, which is one of the problems we need to tackle in the developed world.