

A Philosophical Reflection on the Disaster and School Education¹

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Abstract. This paper considered the disaster and school education from philosophical perspectives: 1) Brian Denman proposed the paradigm change of the educational research from individual to society with his new concept “education security.” It was clarified that we would be able to take this idea to examine the foundation for school education after the disaster. 2) John Dewey wrote that society existed through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurred by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger. Without education as communication, social life could not survive. We should consider this Dewey’s insight into education and society again in order to create a new basis of school education after 3.11. 3) It was suggested that we would need to consider a broader philosophical idea behind the phenomena, namely to think about the structure of dependence. The disaster thrust the limitations of the modern values of independence and individualism before us. Although the notion of dependence was usually referred to a negative meaning such as *amae* in Japanese, we would be able to reinterpret the idea of “depending on each other” positively.

Introduction

The East Japan Great Earthquake and Tsunami occurred on March 11, 2011. The magnitude of the earthquake was 9 on the Richter scale, the biggest in Japanese history, and the victims were nearly 19,000. Japan is a quake-prone country and has been visited by several big earthquakes in the past. There was an earthquake of magnitude 8 in 1896 around the same place as this time with victims more than 20,000. The Great Kanto Earthquake of magnitude 8.2 struck in 1923. The victims exceeded 100,000 people, which was the worst in Japanese history. There was an earthquake bigger than magnitude 8 in 1933 off the coast of Sanriku.

However, 3.11 was the unbelievable worst disaster ever happened in Japan, because the collapse of the nuclear power plant in Fukushima occurred with the earthquake and tsunami. The disaster caused serious damage particularly to school education in Fukushima Prefecture. More than 18,000 students were forced to evacuate and change their school.

This paper presents three philosophical viewpoints in order to consider the disaster and school education. The first is the concept of education security proposed by Australian comparative educationist Brian Denman. He insists that we should have a paradigm change

regarding education research from individual to society. The second is the philosophy of education of American philosopher John Dewey. Dewey’s philosophy will give us a clue to considering a new basis of school education after 3.11. The third is the conception of *amae* as a philosophical thought behind our social phenomena. *Amae* shows opposite human relationships to the Western individualism which had considered the important value of individual independence. However the disaster seemed to thrust its limits before us. This viewpoint is for rethinking the notion of *amae* that relates to the idea “depending on each other.”

1. The East Japan Great Earthquake and School Education: The Amount of Damage and the Will to Reconstruct

How extensive damage did the disaster cause to school education? According to the Issue Brief from the National Diet Library², the death toll of students and teachers in the disaster rose to 641 all over Japan, actually in Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima Prefectures and in Tokyo Metropolis, and the number of students and teachers left missing rose to 92, as of 26 January 2012. 6,284 schools were damaged, and 193 schools out of them need to be rebuilt or repaired on a large scale. A

supplementary budget of 421.1 billion yen was prepared for the restoration works for the public schools in the 2011 fiscal year, 15.1 billion yen in the 2012 fiscal year.

It is unable to figure out at once how serious situations were shown by these numbers of schools and the size of the budget. When we face the fact, however, that more than 700 children were killed or missing, we only grieve for that. Not only these numbers but also plenty of astonishing visual records and photographs reported by the mass media just after the disaster straightly indicate its enormous violence. Furthermore, when we know that 18,368 students in Fukushima Prefecture lost their schools and had to move to other schools, we are lost for words. It is compared to that more than 80 elementary schools disappeared in Fukushima Prefecture, if we calculate with the numbers of elementary students and schools, and the average number of the students per school.

Japanese Association of School Education responded to the harsh reality caused by the disaster and published a book *The East Japan Great Earthquake and School Education*³ within one year after the Earthquake as a result of investigation project. The disaster was thought back in the book, and it was pointed out that each person's self-judgment and self-help (*tendenko*) was quite important contrary to conforming behavior as an evacuation principle at schools, and successful experiences in this disaster should be relativized. The project also made it clear that reconsideration of the fundamental significance of school education was initiated at this opportunity. That is a rediscovery of school's attraction for remaking the community through children's education and prospects for the future as well as a self-examination of Japanese modern education. They start considering the school's role as an emotional support for people in the community and a foothold for creating local culture, which is nothing other than a demonstration of the will to reconstruct.

2. Education Security as a New Concept: From Individual to Society

The framework for Australian comparative

educationist Brian Denman's concept of education security consists of educational access, equity and quality of education. The issues of educational access, such as UNESCO's campaign of education for all: EFA, relate to the elimination of education poverty, which is considered as education security. The issues of exclusivity and inclusivity refer to educational access and equity. Education security aims at inclusivity. With the belief that "fair and inclusive education is one of the most powerful levers available for making societies more equitable, innovative, and democratic⁴," it makes education "open to all." In terms of the issues of quality of education, the objective is the transference from quantitative indicators with numerical expression by tests to qualitative ones. The concept of education security suggests an expansion of the perspective for considering the practice of education. As the figure indicates, education security consists of security of food, economy, health, person, politics environment, community and school education. School education is just one of the aspects for education security, which means we have to take all the aspects into consideration in order to examine school education.

Let us pay attention to inclusivity of education in this paper. Denman points out that exclusivity often conjures up notions of elitist models that promote and maintain social class levels, most often with the individual student having to pay for his or her education (user-pays)⁵. It is generally considered a Western model; quality of education through contest and merit in educational performance, which suggests that education is an investment. On the contrary, inclusivity in education claims a change of direction from the notion of benefit of education for individual to the one for society. Denman's argument refers to the relationship between higher education and economy in developing countries as important concrete realities for the justification of the direction change. At the same time, he extends the idea to education in general and tries to connect it to the notion of new publicness. He says,

"The challenge is in recognizing that education security also pertains to the long-term benefits of

ensuring that our children’s children receive a ‘quality’ education to the levels and standards they are capable of achieving and their ability to contribute to society.⁶”

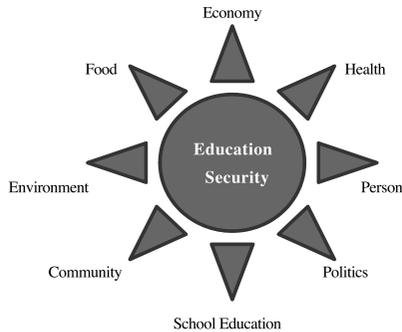


Figure: The Structure of Education Security

When discussing the origin of our school education, it is necessary to go back to the human resource development and its selection system to construct and preserve the industrial society. It necessarily attached importance to society’s demand, and had a tendency to neglect individual’s accomplishment and self-realization. To overcome the neglect, exclusivity in education together with a Western ideology of individualism has been justified. But the disaster will put a question mark to it, because it placed the fact to us that school, particularly elementary school, was closely connected with community as an aspect of society. Many volunteers worked to encourage the people in the disaster-stricken areas soon after the earthquake. Music save the people and sports inspired courage in many sufferers. The power of professional musicians and top-level athletes was quite large. However, as well as those musicians and athletes, unnamed children at school, playing music and sports, certainly gave zest for living to many people in the areas.

It is clear that the beneficiary of education is each individual at first. That is what receiving education means. If we observe, however, the situation from broader perspective, it is also clear that school education has an important function to build and maintain community. That opposes the principle of competition of neo-liberalism. Denman’s concept of

education security suggests us the change of direction in education.

3. With John Dewey’s Philosophy of Education

As is commonly known, John Dewey emphasized the close connection between school and society. Dewey founded an elementary school attached to the University of Chicago 116 years ago in 1896. He wrote in *The School and Society*⁷ (1899), which is a report of educational practices at the University Elementary School, that an individualistic standpoint to look at school as something between teacher and pupil, and to have interest in the individual child’s progress of ability needs to be enlarged⁸. For Dewey, an important matter was the relationship between all the children and community, therefore the issues of education had an intimate relationship with democracy. This point of view will correspond to the principles of Denman’s education security referred above in the section 2.

Dewey likened society to biological life and stated, “Society exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life. This transmission occurs by means of communication of habits of doing, thinking, and feeling from the older to the younger.⁹” Communication between different generations, from the older to the younger, that transmits the habits of doing, thinking, and feeling, is the broadest definition of education for Dewey.

Dewey said, “the mere absorbing of facts and truths is so exclusively individual an affair that it tends very natural to pass into selfishness,¹⁰” where almost the only measure for success is a competitive one, a comparison in the examination to see which child has succeeded in getting ahead of others in storing up, in accumulating, the maximum of information¹¹. We will find the same situation at our present school education. This was brought into existence already 100 years ago in America, and Dewey confronted the problem. Dewey emphasized the role of occupations at school life. In the occupations, children help each other. Although there is emulation, it is not with regard to the quantity of information personally absorbed, but with reference to the quality of work done¹². In this way, Dewey insists that school

must be organized on the social basis.

One of the activities at Dewey's school was, for example, sewing. Dewey did not simply promote such practical activities, but put an emphasis on scientific insight into natural materials and processes and the realization of the historic development of man in the activities at school. We must pay attention to Dewey's standpoint of science. He did not insist the active experiences only.

We will be able to recognize Dewey's notion of school education in "cooperative learning" at our current schools. But I want to focus on the fundamental social characteristics of school education asserted by Dewey rather than the issues of educational practical methodologies. Dewey wrote;

"... not only does social life demand teaching and learning for its own permanence, but the very process of living together educates. It enlarges and enlightens experience; it stimulates and enriches imagination.¹³"

But as Dewey further claimed, the institutionalized modern school education ignored education's social necessity and its identity with all human association that affects conscious life, and which identified it with imparting information about remote matters and the conveying of learning through verbal signs: the acquisition of literacy¹⁴. Of course, the concrete situations became much more complicated, but the basic principles of school education did not change from the age of Dewey.

The social necessity of education in which the process itself of living together educates has been forgotten and missed in our daily work of our school. What made the state of forgetfulness explicit would be the disaster. The foundation of learning scientific knowledge or general concepts exists in living together with family and people in the community, drinking water and eating foods of the place, and living in the dialect of the place with tradition of the culture. We should try to imagine and sympathize with this notion of life as education through Dewey's philosophy of education.

4. Revisiting the Notion of *Amae*

Takeo Doi's *Amae no Kozo* or *The Structure of Amae* was published in 1971 by Kobundo, Tokyo, which was translated by John Bester into English under the title of *The Anatomy of Dependence*¹⁵. Doi was a psychiatrist and he tried to interpret the expansion of the meaning of a Japanese common word *amae* from his field of psychiatry. Its novelty attracted various fields of learning such as sociology. The reason why Doi paid attention to *amae* came from his own experience of cultural differences in America. According to Doi, the Japanese word *amae* could be translated into English as "dependence," but there is no English word just for *amae*.

Doi found the psychological prototype of *amae* lied in the psychology of infant in its relationship to its mother. He gave a definition of *amae* mentality as "the attempt to deny the fact of separation that is such an inseparable part of human existence and to obliterate the pain of separation.¹⁶" The prototype of *amae* could be interpreted as enjoyment in being loved, or more briefly a drive to dependence.

Amae is an expression of human relationships in Japanese language and a Japanese way of thinking. Therefore, various phenomena related to *amae* would be so Japanese that *amae* may have a possibility of a key concept to understand Japanese mentality and Japanese society. Doi claims that, however, if we take its definition above into consideration, *amae* could be observed not only in Japanese people, but also more or less in human relationships in general. Doi says "that *amae* exists even in Western society where it is not apprehended consciously as such." He takes an example in American male's imperious behavior saying that "When is dinner going to be ready?¹⁷"

We pay attention to the development of the discussion of *amae* into education in this paper. Doi discovered the human relationships of *amae* in the basis of the merit of Japanese primary education compared with American education in the research project on education jointly with American educationist Catherine Lewis¹⁸. According to Doi, *amae* of the drive to dependence or link forms the trust among students in the class. Lewis agrees with Doi.

She insists that the *amae*-trust relation exists in Japanese teacher's consciousness of *gakkyu zukuri* or classroom making, for which they might raise a corresponding English word "classroom management," but that is a different idea. What realizes *gakkyu zukuri* is the human relationships of *amae*.

Doi takes note of both aspects of *amae* in reality, that is, the positive one and the negative one. In the negative aspect of *amae*, children might easily rely on others and learn crafty. In terms of education, we have to construct the positive human relationships based on *amae*. Lewis states that autonomy, belonging, competence as children's three basic needs are excellently achieved in Japanese primary education. Autonomy is not contradictory to *amae* or dependence from Lewis's observation of Japanese education. It is possible for children to learn critical thinking for autonomy in accordance with growth in the Japanese human relationships based on *amae*.

This notion of *amae* will be applied to the relation between school education and the community in the same way. Students studying at school form the drive to dependence on family, teachers, comrades and the people in the community in their learning. The drive to dependence, *amae*, supports school education in the community. It seems to me that the disaster of 3.11 revealed the importance of the existence of *amae*. I believe that the human relationships of *amae* certainly exists behind a seeming catchphrase like *kizuna*. I want to propose the reconsideration of *amae* as a philosophical conception that supports the vector from individual to society.

Notes

1. This paper was presented at the Third Pacific Rim Conference on Education: Teacher Education and Professional Development held at Hokkaido University of Education Sapporo on July 7, 2012.
2. Kurokawa, Naohide "Higashi-nihon-daishinsai kara no gakko no fukko – genjo to kadai – [Reconstruction of Schools after the East Japan Great Earthquake: The Present Condition and Problems]" *Issue Brief* (The National Diet Library), No.736, 2012, pp.1-12.
3. Japanese Association of School Education

Investigation Project (Ed.) *Higashi-nihon daishinsai to gakko kyoiku [The East Japan Great Earthquake and School Education]*, Kamogawa Publisher, 2012.

4. Denman, Brian "Education Security as a New Concept: Technology transfer and the hidden curriculum" unpublished paper, p.5. This paper was translated into Japanese by Higuchi and became a part of the paper, Higuchi, Satoshi and Denman, Brian "Education Security as a New Concept: A proposal and prospects" *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education, Hiroshima University*, Part I, Vol.59, 2010, pp.21-29.
5. *Ibid.*, p.5.
6. *Ibid.*, p.6.
7. Dewey, John *The School and Society*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976.
8. *Ibid.*, p.5.
9. Dewey, John *Democracy and Education. The Middle Works, 1899-1924, volume 9: 1916*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980, p.5.
10. Dewey, *op.cit.*, *The School and Society*, pp.10-11.
11. *Ibid.*, p.11.
12. *Ibid.*, p.11.
13. Dewey, *op.cit.*, *Democracy and Education*, p.9.
14. *Ibid.*, p.12.
15. Doi, Takeo, trans. by Bester, John, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, Tokyo and New York: Kodansha International, 1973.
16. *Ibid.*, p.75.
17. Doi, Takeo "Amae saiko [Rethinking Amae]" *Doi's Collected Works vol.2*, Tokyo: Iwanami, 2000, p.112.
18. Doi, Takeo, Lewis, Catherine and others *Amae to kyoiku to nihon bunka [Amae, Education and Japanese Culture]*, Tokyo: PHP, 2005.

附記

本稿は、2012年7月7日に、北海道教育大学札幌校で開催された第3回教育に関する環太平洋国際会議で、発表されたものである。この国際会議では、「教師教育とプロフェッショナル・ディ

ベロップメント」が主テーマであったが、教育に関する「哲学」の分野も発表枠として設けられており、発表申請が受理された。当日の発表では、特に「甘え」の問題に参加者の関心が寄せられ、

多くの質問がなされた。本稿は教員養成教育のための一つの哲学的序説であると、筆者は考えている。