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Contextos y procesos en investigación educativa

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Sumario

Japanese passive democracy and education

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1. Introduction

Japan's democracy is ambiguous. On one hand, officially speaking, Japan is a liberal democratic country characterized by the regular elections with the presence of legitimate political parties and the protection for the system of public debates, and has the longest history of democracy in Asia. In fact, most of international indexes on democracy rank Japan as one of stable democracies (Polity IV, 2010; World Bank, 2015; Freedom House, 2019). However, on the other hand, there are also academics and researchers expressing skeptical views on the real contents and quality of democracy in Japan due to the passive and inactive political attitude of the people.

If the democracy and politics in Japan is not so active but the Japanese people are happy with it, it is not so problematic; unfortunately, it is not like that. As a matter of fact, the Japanese are not satisfied with their democracy and politics. For example, Ikeda and Kohno find a surprising survey result that the Japanese are the most dissatisfied people with their government's performance of all other publics participated in the East Asian Barometer (Ikeda y Kohno, 2010). Then, one may think that perhaps the Japanese do not believe in democracy itself. Still, this supposition is easily overturned; the result of East Asian Barometer shows that the Japanese are the faithful believers of democracy (Ikeda y Kohno, 2010). Yet, then again, Japanese people show

the curious phenomenon that they have extremely low perception of political efficacy, and they are very pessimistic about the future of their democracy (Ikeda y Kohno, 2010).

Incidentally, there are several scholars who claim that Asian countries have their own style of democracy, which is not necessarily resemble what is generally treated as a model of democracy. Some argue that Asian democracy has more characteristics of communitarian contents. If so, the Japan's democratic discontent may be caused by the mismatches or the conflicts between the widely accepted democracy and some features of Asian or Japanese culture. In this case, it is also important to seek the origin of democratic ideas Japanese people hold and searching the effect of formal political education may give us a clue for this question.

Therefore, in this paper, the Japanese democracy is studied to find out the causes of Japan's inanimate democracy by focusing the relationship between democratic concepts, political education and Japanese culture.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Democracy

Democracy is the most accepted and used form of governance in the contemporary world, and studies on it vary from the philosophical approaches to the practical dimensions. Ever since the ancient Greece adopt democracy as a form of governance to establish the structure of Cosmo (order) from Chaos (chaos), democratic countries are expected to accomplish several criteria such as freedom to form and join organizations, freedom of expression, right to vote, free and fair elections, independence of law and justice system, and so forth (Chiba, 2000, p. 6). One of the traits of the ancient Greek democracy, which is not well known but should be the very base of democracy, is the political culture of participation and auto-governance (Chiba, 2000, p. 5). To be more precise, for them, the right form of political participation was to participate it by communicating and speaking out about the public issues, as well as listen to the opinions of others. To a certain extent this tradition has been inherited by

the Western democracies, especially the Anglo-Saxon democracies. Studies of participatory democracy, particularly deliberative democracy, have a lot to do with this philosophy.

Recent mainstreams of studies focus on the quality of democracy; it is due to that although the old democracies seem have established their roots upon their cultures and histories, yet serious problems such as extreme individualism, political apathy, political corruption and so called "balkanization" of states are observed more and more, and Japanese democracy is not an exception.

2.2. Japanese group-oriented culture

The argument saying that Asia, particularly East Asia, has its own way of governance, which should be considered within the framework of democracy yet not exactly same as the Western one, is not a new debate. Some intellectuals label East Asian democracy as "soft authoritarianism" (Fukuyama, 1995b, p. 13) or "East Asian (authoritarian) communitarianism" (Etzioni, Volmert y Rothschild, 2004, p. 9). The emphasize on difference or sometimes a kind of uncomfortable sense expressed by some Western scholars towards East Asian democracy is mostly caused by the centrality and importance of family-originated community (which mainly originated from Confucianism) before the rights and values of individuals, and the avoidance of direct confrontation in order to maintain the absolute harmony of society. Such environment is not favorable for citizens to develop so called civic skills such as debating in public space or participating in social movements openly. In this sense, active political participation, which ancient Greeks highly valued and still is considered important in the Western democracy, is not grounded in some Asian democracies.

As far as Japan is concerned, the two characteristics of Asian democracy stated above can be seen there. In fact, Fukuyama lists two symbolic characteristics of Western democracy that are not extended sufficiently in the Japanese democracy: the emphasis on the public political debates and the individualism (Fukuyama, 1995, p. 21). However, if analyzed in more detail and paying special attention to the difference among Japan and the rest of Confucian Asian countries, one would find that the

family-connected communities or unities is not as much important as other societies in Japan. Instead, for Japanese people, the principal unities to belong and to identify themselves are "groups" such as companies, clubs, schools, state, etc. Some intellectuals call this as the Japanese "Groupism (集団主義 *shūdan shugi*)" (McCargo, 2000; Yamagishi, 2010; Komai, 2000; Doi, 2000). On the positive side, the Japanese Groupism enables people to generate relationships of strong trust outside the family environment; whereas, on the other hand, the centrality of group sometimes ends up with the severe mobilization such as extreme nationalism observed during the Pacific Wars, and the phenomenon like workaholic persons called "company solders (企業戦士 *kigyō senshi*)." Pye and Pye explain that the Japanese version of Confucianism, namely Groupism, has been the moral base of the Japanese culture, especially for the maintenance of importance of values of merits, virtues and loyalty. Moreover, Groupism without too much importance of family helps to legitimate the paternalistic form of elitism that enables to maintain the good balance between the order and the competitiveness (Pye y Pye, 1985, pp. 57-58, 160). There is a bunch of researchers who deny the influence of Confucianism over Japanese Groupism but argue that it is a form of actions created artificially (Komai, 2000: 2; Doi, 2000: 64; Yamagishi, 2010). Thus, what is clear here is that Japan has a peculiar culture named Groupism, which gives behavioural norms to the Japanese people.

3. Material and method

3.1. Research methodology

Due to the characteristics of data, this study uses the empirical method. The descriptive analysis of two social surveys will be carried out in order to grasp the general overviews of states of democracy, people's attitudes toward politics and cultural influences in Japan.

3.2. Data

Two social survey data are analyzed: Asian Barometer, Wave 2 on Japan (2007)[1] done by The Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), and the Young Voters' Value Survey (*wakai yūkensha noiIshikichōsa*) (YVVS) Wave 3 (2009)[2] by Association for Promoting Fair Elections (*akarui senkyo suishin kyōkai*).

ABS is a regional-wide social survey based on the model developed by Globalbarometer Survey. It has extensive questionnaires including public opinions about political values and democracy. It also pays much attention to the cultures of Asia such as communitarian tendency, hierarchical social construction and authoritative roles of political leaders.

YVVS is a nation-wide social survey done every 10 years. There are two parts of this survey: the value survey of young people and the value survey of general voters. The former one's target group is the young people between16 to 30 years old, and the latter one is those voters of more than 20 years old. It aims to understand the general social values, knowledge on politics and the system of election, political efficacy, political education at schools and so forth. It is valuable to refer to the effects of formal school education on politics and democracy, because the formal education is a part of the process of formation of Japanese political culture.

4. Results

ABS shows that most Japanese are not quite happy with the government performance (table 1). As far as the Japanese de-

mocracy is concerned, the public opinions are more or less 50% positive and 50% negative evaluation (table 2). It appears to be enough for the support for democracy, yet, the Japanese tend to answer in this way because they have an absolute hatred toward authoritarian governance due to the past experience of militarism, therefore, there are no more regime options but democracy to support (Chu, Diamond, Nathan and Shin, 2010). Moreover, if compared with other East Asian countries, Japan has the lowest proportion (about 45%) of people satisfied with the functioning of democracy in the country despite the fact that Japanese democracy is thought to be the most stable one in this region (Chu, Diamond, and Nathan, 2010, p. 245).

Table 1. Satisfaction with government in Japan.

q104 How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the present government?

	No.	%
1 Very satisfied	23	2.2
2 Somewhat satisfied	308	28.9
3 Somewhat dissatisfied	503	47.1
4 Very dissatisfied	175	16.4
8 Can't choose	58	5.4
Total	1067	100

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 2 (2007))

Table 2. Satisfaction with democracy in Japan.

q098 On the whole, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way democracy works in Japan?

	No.	%
1 Not at all satisfied	80	7.5
2 Not very satisfied	423	39.6
3 Fairly satisfied	475	44.5
4 Very satisfied	38	3.6
8 Can't choose	50	4.7
9 Decline to answer	1	0.1
Total	1067	100

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 2 (2007))

Despite pessimistic views, the Japanese are still the most strong and faithful believers of democracy. As the table 3 shows, there is no doubt that the Japanese think democracy is the only way to govern the country. Yet, as stated before, this uncondi-

tional acceptance toward democracy is originated from the bitter past experience of wars caused by the military authoritarian regimes, which has driven the Japanese to believe that any forms of undemocratic governance are unthinkable now and forever. Therefore, the strong belief in democracy in Japan is rigid and absolute; still it does not mean that all Japanese are well informed about the principles of democracy or given sufficient opportunities to think and learn deeply about the meaning of democracy.

Table 3. Belief in democracy in Japan.

q103 Which would you think democracy is suitable for our country?

	No.	%
1 Democracy is completely unsuitable	1	0.1
2 ...	4	0.4
3 ...	11	1
4 ...	29	2.7
5 ...	111	10.4
6 ...	107	10
7 ...	159	14.9
8 ...	277	26
9 ...	118	11.1
10 Democracy is perfectly suitable	144	13.5
98 Can't choose	105	9.8
99 Decline to answer	1	0.1
Total	1067	100

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 2 (2007))

Then, what does democracy mean to Japanese people? ABS includes the question asking the meaning of democracy, and the result is as below.

Table 4. Meaning of democracy for Japanese.

qII92 People often differ in their views on the characteristic that is essential to democracy. If you have to choose only one of the things;

	No.	%
1 Opportunity to change the government through elections	370	34.7
2 Freedom to criticize those in power	127	11.9
3 A small income gap between rich and poor	186	17.4
4 Basic necessities like food, clothes and shelter etc. for ev	291	27.3
7 Do not understand the question	15	1.4
8 Can't choose	76	7.1
9 Decline to answer	2	0.2
Total	1067	100

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 2 (2007))

As seen, the voting-based approach to democracy is clear in Japan, and people relate democracy to "freedom" or "rights." In this sense, it is probably right to say that the most accepted philosophy of democracy in Japan is the liberal democracy, which is also commonly established in the Western countries.

Now we focus on the process of learning about democracy and politics in Japan. The most influential origin of political education is, with doubt, the formal school education. As YVVS shows, the formal school education teaches about democracy in every level.

Table 5. Political education at the formal school education

q18s1.1 When did you study about politics?

	Yes No.	Yes %	No No.	No %	Total No.
Primary School	570	34.6	1077	65.4	1647
Junior High School	1259	76.4	388	23.6	1647
High School	894	54.3	753	45.7	1647
(Don't know	91	4.1)			
(No answer	50	2.2)			
(missing values 579)					

(Source: Young Voters' Value Survey, Wave 3 (2009))

The curious thing is that lower number of people experienced classes on politics in high schools. On one hand, it probably comes from the fact that it includes the number of persons who do not go further education after the mandatory education. Still considering the fact that the high school education continuous rate in Japan is extraordinarily high (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, n.d.), it is probably because of the low interest and preference toward such classes in relation with university entrance exams. When it comes to the contents of classes on politics, the general principles and history of democracy are taught widely and the substance fit more or less with the general philosophy of democracy analyzed above. Thus, it would be safe to consider the school education as the most important source of Japanese' knowledge on democracy (table 6).

Table 6. Content of school education on democracy.

q18s2.2 What did you learn?

	Yes No.	Yes %	No No.	No %	Total No.
Principles of democracy like civilian control and rule of majority	1309	86.9	197	13.1	1506
About electoral system	1202	79.8	304	20.2	1506
History of universal suffrage	750	49.8	756	50.2	1506
Significance of election and importance of voting	733	48.7	774	51.3	1506
Ways to vote at polling stations	155	10.3	1351	89.7	1506
Practical experiences like debate and mock voting	51	3.4	1455	96.6	1506
Others	8	0.5	1498	99.5	1506
(Don't know	24	1.6)			
(No answer	20	1.3)			
(missing values 720)					

(Source: Young Voters' Value Survey, Wave 3 (2009))

The cramming style of education for the university entrance exam is observed, and less importance is paid for the practical experience to touch the heart of genuine democracy such as debate or mock voting. Therefore, ultimately, the political education in Japan is to learn the items for examinations, and not to educate the democratic citizens. It may be said that the practical experiences of democracy are compensated by the existence of student unions. In fact, according to the YVVS it seems that most of people have had the student unions at some stage of their schooling (table 7). The influence of such experience over the attitude to democracy cannot be known from this survey yet. It will be valuable to see some correlations among the student union experience and the political attitude or ideas of democracy.

Table 7. Experience of student unions.

q20. Did your schools have student unions elected by voting?

	Yes No.	Yes %	No No.	No %	Total No.
Primary school	863	38.7	1364	61.3	2226
Junior High School	1423	63.9	803	36.1	2226
High School	1052	47.3	1174	52.7	2226
No Student Unions	271	12.2	1955	87.8	226
(Don't know	187	8.4)			
(No answer	93	4.2)			

(Source: Young Voters' Value Survey, Wave 3 (2009))

Finally, we examine the variables showing the Japanese group-oriented culture. As seen before, this groupism often appears as the preference for social harmony and conflict avoidance. As observed from following tables, ABS data confirms this tendency.

Table 8. Japanese conflict avoidance 1.

q066 When one has conflict with a neighbor, the best way to
    deal with it is to accommodate the other person.

	No.	%
1 Strongly agree	102	9.6
2 Somewhat agree	670	62.8
3 Somewhat disagree	199	18.7
4 Strongly disagree	11	1
8 Can't choose	85	8
Total	1067	100

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 2 (2007))

Table 9. Japanese conflict avoidance 2.

q139 If people have too many different ways of thinking,
    society will be chaotic.

	No.	%
1 Strongly agree	109	10.2
2 Somewhat agree	435	40.8
3 Somewhat disagree	321	30.1
4 Strongly disagree	88	8.2
8 Can't choose	107	10
9 Decline to answer	7	0.7
Total	1067	100

(Source: Asian Barometer Survey, Wave 2 (2007))

What can be observed from these outcomes is that, at the cultural level, the Japanese do not want the open conflicts to maintain the social harmony.

5. Discussion

From this descriptive analysis, what can be observed is the clear gap among the idea of democracy Japanese people hold, the Japanese political education and the collectivist culture. At the political level, the Japanese are conscious about the importance of debate and constructive criticism to discuss on the important political issues and to achieve the persuasive and understandable solutions. Yet, at the cultural level, people consider the Japanese group-oriented and conflict avoidance culture to be important to maintain the harmonious society and avoid chaos. Moreover, the Japanese education does not encourage to teach the practice of democracy, as rather it is devoted for the theoretical contents.

In addition, Japanese people will not feel comfortable joining social movements and protests because such actions harm the social harmony. Therefore, in sum, there is a serious contradiction among the applauded idea of democracy, the Japanese political education, and the Japanese collectivist culture. Puzzled and confused by the gap, it can be assumed that the negative and hopeless answers expressed by the Japanese in the social surveys like dissatisfaction towards its politics and democracy.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we analysed the Japanese democracy by using two social survey data to find out the causes of Japan's puzzling democracy. We focused on the three variables, namely democratic concepts, political education and Japanese culture. Descriptive analysis showed that there were certain ideas of democracy widely believed by the Japanese people, which were mainly taught by the formal political education, and the persistent cultural norms promoted the group-oriented behaviour and environment. The value democracy and the groupism culture have been living side by side. Yet, some signals of distortion have been appearing such as the political indifference. In order to peruse the quality of democracy, probably it is time for Japan to recognize the gap mentioned in this work and challenge to seek the harmonious coexistence of genuine democracy with respectful culture of groupism, starting by re-examining the way of political education.

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Contextos y procesos en investigación educativa

En el ámbito educativo, la investigación es un proceso natural promovido por el propio profesorado como método para adaptar los contenidos teóricos y prácticos a un conjunto de estudiantes con una singularidad particular. Desde este contexto tan particular, las universidades y las instituciones públicas y privadas ligadas a la educación tienen un papel relevante en fomentar la realización de investigaciones que promuevan un cambio real basándose en datos concretos que incorporen los avances en tecnología y metodologías activas a la enseñanza. La contextualización de las investigaciones es uno de los principales factores de efectividad para que las decisiones sobre la innovación tengan éxito. Sin la toma de conciencia de la realidad de las situaciones y problemáticas concretas, toda innovación está abocada al fracaso.

En este trabajo se recopila, en sus diferentes capítulos, una muestra de las investigaciones más actuales en educación en campos tan diversos como la gamificación y las metodologías activas de enseñanza, la educación sexual, la neuroeducación aplicada a diferentes disciplinas, la convivencia escolar, la inclusión educativa, la competencia digital del profesorado y del alumnado o el tratamiento de las altas capacidades intelectuales en el siglo XXI. Es una muestra representativa y actual de las líneas de investigación que se están siguiendo en educación tanto, en el ámbito nacional como internacional, promovidas por investigadores de diversos países y con un tratamiento interdisciplinar de las temáticas.