

Towards Thinking Not Modelled on the ‘External’

Discussion of Alternative Thinking within Research on Japanese Philosophy of Education

Mika Okabe (Osaka University)

Abstract

Since the advent of the modern era, Japanese educational and academic fields have been characterized by a tendency to model domestic education and pedagogy after given alternatives from overseas. This type of thinking has provided an orientation for alternative solutions, but has not sufficiently contributed to human or social transformation. Rather it has sometimes been complicit in maintaining existing societies.

In this study, I will provide an overview of special issues, symposiums and subject studies/thematic researches collected from *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, from the founding issue (1959) through Volume 111 (2015), and then review how the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan has examined and evaluated its own research style, particularly its own alternative orientations and thinking. In addition, I will consider how we should reflect on our own alternative orientation and thinking from now on, and, moreover, what these self-reflections might lead to in research on educational philosophy.

This study will demonstrate the importance of thinking beyond the traditional dichotomy and the disregard for the Other (the alien outside of the known) in research on educational philosophy. What I mean here the traditional dichotomy is, for example, that between language-centrism (logo-centrism) and intuitionism, that between education for the purpose of industrialisation and pedagogy with the goal of human emancipation from industrialization, that between institutionalisation and criticism of institutionalisation and so on. I will also show the importance of continually questioning and examining our political positioning and thinking style.

Keywords

alternative orientations and thinking, Japanese philosophy of education, beyond the dichotomy, beyond to the Other, thinking not modelled on the ‘external’

Introduction

The statement of the purpose of this symposium mentions that ‘an orientation to a different, better education than what exists here and now’, in other words ‘an alternative orientation’, is what drives the pursuit of education and pedagogy. This is certainly valid, if we presume that education and pedagogy, in particular modern education and pedagogy, should be the forces driving human transformation, which in turn creates social transformation. This is also valid for educational philosophy in the present-day, which has attempted to succeed critically modern pedagogy or to overcome or transcend it. If we recall that the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan was founded with the goal of examining and designing post-war pedagogy from a perspective different to that of the Japanese Educational Research Association¹, the work of the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan, as well as its very existence, might well be said to embody alternative orientations and thinking themselves.

In such a case, we would do well always to be mindful, as is noted in the statement of the purpose of this symposium, of whether alternative orientations of research on educational philosophy have ‘betrayed their own purposes and closed themselves within a certain fixed structure of thinking’. A typical example of this pitfall is the phenomenon criticized by Akira Mori², which he referred to as ‘exhibitions’ and ‘rapid discards and adoptions’: the successive introduction of new systems, methodologies or concepts from the West by government and academia, to which school teachers should respond by quickly discarding the old and adopting the new. This phenomenon has been seen in Japanese educational and academic fields since the advent of the modern era. Criticisms of similar phenomena are found in symposiums and subject studies in *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, for example, Vol. 31 (1975)³, Vol. 55 (1987)⁴ and Vol. 73 (1996)⁵.

¹ M. Ogasawara et al., “Sengo Kyouiku Tetsugaku no Shuppatsu” (Departure of Educational Philosophy after the Second World War), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 97, 2008, pp. 164-172 and p.174.

² A. Mori, “Gendai no Kyouiku to Kyouiku Shichou” (Modern Education and Educational Trends), *Gendai Kyouiku Shichou*, A. Mori ed., Daiichi Houki Shuppan, 1969, p. 34.

³ T. Oura, “Shinohara Sukeichi ni okeru Kyouikugaku Keisei no Tokushitsu: Oubei Kyouiku Shisou Sesshu no Taido wo Chuushin ni shite” (Characteristics of Pedagogical Formation in Shinohara Sukeichi: A Focus on Attitudes for Ingesting Western Educational Thoughts), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 31, 1975, p. 2.

This structure of thinking has certainly driven domestic education and pedagogy by seeking out given alternatives from overseas. This raises the questions of why this structure of thinking is problematic and whether contemporary research on educational philosophy is already free from such thinking.

In past research on educational philosophy in *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, many special issues, symposiums and subject studies/thematic researches have reflected on research on educational philosophy itself, including this structure of thinking. Therefore, in the following sections, I will provide an overview of special issues, symposiums and subject studies/thematic researches collected from the founding issue of *Studies in the Philosophy of Education* (1959) through Volume 111 (2015), and then look back on how the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan has examined and evaluated its own research style, particularly its own alternative orientations and thinking. In addition, I will consider how we should reflect on our own alternative orientation and thinking from now on, and, moreover, what these self-reflections might lead to in research on educational philosophy.

1. Lack of a Sense of the Other

Before giving an overview of past content from *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, let us first examine the issue underlying the structure of thinking that drives domestic education and pedagogy in their search for given alternatives from overseas.

As is well known, this structure of thinking is not unique to pedagogy. According to Masao Maruyama⁶, the same tendency can be found across Japanese research and thought. Generally speaking, Japanese academics have imported Western ideas and thoughts without regard to their inherent historical structures and premises, and have focused only on independent fragments of them (for example, Rousseau's concept, Hegel's dialectic, Dewey's school system and so on), with this continuous influx of fragments

⁴ H. Usami, "Kenkyuu Tougi ni kansuru Soukatsuteki Houkoku" (A Comprehensive Report on the Symposium), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 55, 1987, pp. 14-15.

⁵ S. Yano, "Kyouiku Tetsugaku no Mirai" (The Future of the Philosophy of Education), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 73, 1996, pp. 42-43.

⁶ M. Maruyama, *Nihon no Shisou* (Japanese Thoughts), Iwanami Shoten, 1961, p. 7 and p.14.

occurring without profound dialogue or examination of their roles and meanings in the context of Japan's past and current situation. Put differently, Japanese academia's encounter with Western research and thought has not been a dialogue or confrontation with the Other, but rather a non-confrontational acceptance based on one's own daily life and experience⁷. Thus, Japanese research and thought have never been able to form a historical core or pivot, through which they could position themselves historically in relation to foreign research and thought⁸.

Maruyama notes that the biggest danger brought about by this structure of thinking is the lack of a sense of the Other, the alien outside of the known. The 'sparsity of attitude in confronting what is completely different from oneself' creates a certain type of 'tolerance' in accepting any type of foreign research and thought⁹. However Maruyama notes that such 'tolerance' brings about an 'easy joining' of the 'internal' (the known) and the 'external' (the Other), and forms a timeless and borderless world of thinking in which one sees and thinks always and everywhere based on one's own daily life and experience, and therefore one never encounters or confronts the Other¹⁰. There are no discontinuities, leaps or qualitative transformations in this world of thinking, and there are no deep conversations with or confrontations of the Other. Even with new systems, methodologies or concepts being continuously introduced from overseas, the structure of 'internally' oriented closed thinking remains largely unchanged. This results in what appears to be a constant, passionate struggle of alternatives, but is actually a state in which there is no change; that is, no human transformation nor social transformation to speak of.

2. Alternative Orientations in *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*

In this section, we discuss how the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan has addressed issues surrounding the style of its own thinking.

⁷ J. Karaki, *Shinban Gendaishi e no Kokoromi* (An Attempt to the Contemporary History: New Edition), Chikuma Shobou, 1963, p. 236.

⁸ Cit. Maruyama.

⁹ Ibid., p.16.

¹⁰ Ibid.

(1) Initiative

The first appearance of reflective discussions on the Society's own research style was in the special issue of Volume 12 (1965), entitled 'Kyouiku no Kitei toshite no Ningenkan' (Viewpoints of Human Being as the Basis of Education).

According to Sosuke Hara¹¹, a contributor to this special issue, modern educational thought has asserted the emancipation of sensibility via intuitionism that could break out of the closed language-centric system (logo-centrism) so that education could maintain a 'transformative effect', as well as an orientation towards change. However, underneath this simple dichotomy between intuitionism and language-centrism/logo-centrism lurks the spectre of all education causing simple 'assimilation' to existing societies. Only by escaping this dichotomy would actually occur a breakthrough leading to a 'transformative effect' in education.

Hara was a pioneer on this topic. It is not until the end of the 1980s that discussions on this kind of dichotomy became prominent in the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan.

(2) Moving with Alternative Movements in Society

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan began to question its own research style¹². Initial reflections were strongly influenced by drastic social changes, such as accelerated progress in science and technology, industrialisation, high-level economic growth, internationalisation and a shift towards a society of lifelong learning.

The series of self-reflections by the Society at that time uncritically condemned school education and educational administration for the purpose of industrialisation, and alternatively elevated and promoted pedagogy with the goal of 'human' emancipation from industrialization. This was an overly

¹¹ S. Hara, "Ningen Henkaku to Kansei: Kindai Shimin Shakai Seiritsuki ni okeru Kyouiku no Kadai to Houhou kara" (Human Reform and Aesthesia (Sensibility): an Examination of Educational Issues and Methods at the time of Founding a Modern Citizen Society), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 12, 1965, pp.28-43.

¹² See symposium in *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 29 (1974), subject studies in Vol. 47 (1983) and symposium in Vol. 49 (1984).

naïve dichotomy politically, as is well known today¹³. This dichotomy failed to take into account the fact that some aspects of industrialization have contributed to safe cultural ‘human’ life and that ‘human’ itself is a concept that is both context-dependent and political¹⁴.

This dichotomy in the Society’s thinking at that time presumed the institutionalisation of the modern society to be ‘external to pedagogy’ and criticism of institutionalisation to be ‘inside (or internal to) pedagogy’, and then attempted to mediate or sublimate the ‘external’ and the ‘internal’, while making no attempt to understand a complex and complicated reality. This is, as was noted by Tsunemi Tanaka, no more than a discourse on ‘the union of institutionalisation and criticism of institutionalisation; at first glance these appear to be in conflict, but are actually complementary and unified’¹⁵. In light of the fact that this discourse itself has efficiently promulgated institutionalisation since the advent of the modern era, the series of self-reflections by the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan has led to a certain orientation towards change, but in actuality was perhaps complicit in maintaining the existing society. It was not said to be an alternative orientation and thinking in itself.

(3) Beyond the Dichotomy

This dichotomy in thinking finally became a central focus of self-reflection by the Society in the 1980s. In this reflection, concepts and principles assumed to be self-evident in post-war educational philosophy in Japan became the subjects of critical scrutiny.

Tsunemi Tanaka, for instance, noted that it may now be extremely difficult to reach a consensus on what constitutes a ‘mature adult’¹⁶. Yasuo

¹³ M. Okabe et al., “Kyouin Yousei ni taisuru Kyouiku Tetsugaku no Shikou Style no Hensen” (Thinking Styles of Educational Philosophers Engaged in Teacher Training: A Historical Review), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 100, 2009, p.90.

¹⁴ M. Okabe, “Ronsou no Topos toshite no ‘Ningen’” (‘Human Being’ as a Controversial Topos), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, 100S Special Supplementary Issue, 2009, pp. 312-328.

¹⁵ T. Tanaka, “Kyouiku Kankei no Rekishiteki Seisei to Saikousei: System to Sougosei” (The Historical Generation and Reconstruction of Educational Relationships: Systems and Mutuality), *Kindai Kyouiku Shisou wo Yominaosu*, S. Hara et al. eds., Shinyousha, 1999, p.195.

¹⁶ T. Tanaka, “Otona no Seijuku to Isedaikan Sougo Kisei” (Adult Maturation and Mutual Regulation between Generations), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 61, 1990, pp. 6-7.

Imai noted that education ‘for children’ has not necessarily turned out according to the projections of educators, and has sometimes conversely given way to the pathological suppression of children¹⁷. Akio Miyadera claimed that no universal principles of education now exist, and we must constantly examine their dependence on their contexts of use¹⁸. Satoji Yano proposes that we treat the subject of learning/education not as an entity, but rather as a complex communication system (or relationship) that flows in a diverse fashion¹⁹.

Common to these four researchers’ thinking is a concern that criticism of modern education and pedagogy does not simply devolve into anti-modernism. They were very much aware that the supporting foundations for criticism of modernity are fully contained within modernity itself; hence it is important to criticize modernity even as we inherit it²⁰. This style of thinking does not model substantially the ‘external’ (and the ‘internal’) in order to drive domestic education and pedagogy in their search for alternatives from the ‘external’ like overseas or outside of modernity.

In this style of thinking, there are certainly no preformed consensus or substantive entities. There is also no possible way of setting predetermined goals, processes or plans in education and pedagogy. Moreover, languages as media are constantly being revised. In such a case, it is critical for researchers to be aware not only of the historicity of thoughts as objects of one’s research, but also of one’s own historicity as a researcher and that of the languages one uses. Specifically, it is important that ‘each researcher [creates] a map of thoughts in which one’s theoretical research is positioned’, ‘self-consciously forms a framework for organizing, understanding and evaluating the process of scholarly development’, and plans and conducts unique, original research for the future of educational philosophy in

¹⁷ Y. Imai, “Filter/Jiko Katsudou/Kaisou: Mollenhauer ‘Wasurerareta Renkan’ no Yohaku ni” (Filter, Self-activity and Retrospection: Mollenhauer; In the Margins of *Vergessene Zusammenhänge*), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 61, 1990, p. 13.

¹⁸ A. Miyadera, “Kyouiku no Gourishugiteki Rikai towa Nani ka” (The Meaning of Rationalistic Interpretation of Education), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 63, 1991, p. 7.

¹⁹ S. Yano, “Gouri Shugi to Higouri Shugi no Nikou Tairitsu wo Koete: Asobi no Ronrigaku to Kindai Gourishugi” (Transcending the Dualistic Opposition of Rationalism and Irrationalism: the Logic of Play and the Modern Rationalism), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 63, 1991, p.14.

²⁰ Y. Masubuchi, et al., “Kenkyuu Tougi ni Kansuru Soukatsuteki Houkoku” (Summary Report on the Symposium), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 81, 2000, p. 18.

accordance with this map and framework²¹.

Conclusion

The proposal to create a map and framework for researchers to use in positioning and evaluating their own work is perhaps a response by educational philosophy to address the problem of a lack of historical core or pivot in Japanese research and thought, as was posited by Masao Maruyama. The problem, as suggested by Maruyama, is that the biggest and most fundamental danger is the lack of a sense of the Other. In actuality, the Philosophy of Education Society of Japan has already begun work on this problem in recent years. This work includes discussions on ‘public sphere’ and ‘pathos’ that go beyond into the Other²². As noted by Satoshi Tanaka, ‘the potential to go beyond monologues and to resist neoliberalism can be found within the knowledge of pathos’²³. If this is so, discussions on public sphere would be ontologically supported by the knowledge of pathos, and the knowledge of pathos would reflect itself within discussions on public sphere. They are just in a relationship with each other, neither too close to nor too distant from one another.

What must be kept in mind is that the knowledge of pathos as a form of alternative thinking certainly points towards the Other, but that this is extremely different from substantially modelling the ‘external’ and assimilating the ‘external’ into the ‘internal’. With the knowledge of pathos one gazes on the Other, reaches out to it, resonates with its emotions and actions, and in doing so, both the self and the Other ‘turn towards their own inherent and intrinsic lives’²⁴. This thinking is not modelled on the ‘external’ even though it stares off and beyond into the Other, evokes a sense of the Other, and invites us to the knowledge of pathos. We can then pursue

²¹ S. Yano, “Kyouiku Tetsugaku no Mirai” (The Future of the Philosophy of Education), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 73, 1996, p. 44.

²² For more information on discussions of public sphere, see subject studies in *Studies of the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 83 (2001) and symposium in Vol. 101 (2010) and Vol. 111 (2015) of the same. For more information on discussions of pathos, see Thematic research in Vol. 109 (2014).

²³ S. Tanaka, et al., “Kyouiku Jissen to Kyouiku Tetsugaku: Kore made no Kyouiku Tetsugaku, Kore kara no Kyouikugaku” (Summary Report on the Thematic Research: Educational Practice and Philosophy of Education), *Studies in the Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 109, 2014, p. 52.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 53.

alternatives. Our pedagogical desire for an alternative orientation will avoid the desire for enlightenment that attempts to assimilate and incorporate the Other, and will perhaps become a wish or a prayer for the Other to continue to exist as it is.

In any case, our thinking no longer involves a simple dichotomy between the 'external' and the 'internal'. The position where we research educational philosophy here and now is comprised and textured by multi-dimensional, varied potentialities of pasts, presents and futures that are not necessarily on one's own daily life and experience, while resonating with the Other. We are so open that we can freely envisage potentialities of our research positions. That is why the political positioning of our thinking should be continually questioned and examined.