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Title	Crises in education U.S.A., Japan and Russia
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Citation	北海道大學教育學部紀要, 76, 149-167
Issue Date	1998-06
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/29574
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	76_P149-167.pdf



CRISES IN EDUCATION IN U.S.A., JAPAN AND RUSSIA

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Crisis

The word «crisis» is a fashionable slogan in today's language. Political crisis, ecological crisis, economic crisis, global crisis...; almost all phenomena of contemporary social life might be described in terms of crisis. People tend to apply the term crisis to a variety of social processes, hence, «If many different kinds of situations are labeled crises, then the factor becomes a constant and cannot be related to variations in other aspects of social process.»¹⁾

The problem is what is the meaning of crisis in modern and / or post-modern lexicon? How is it defined in different spheres of social life, specifically in education? What is the status of crisis in system's development? And, finally, how to avoid and / or overcome a crisis, if it occurs?

Let us suggest one of the possible approaches to reflecting on these issues. According to Webster's Dictionary, crisis is «an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending.»²⁾ As it was mentioned above, a variety of phenomena lay under this definition, thus making a meaning of crisis somehow unclear and uncertain. The general theory of crisis is underdeveloped, while modern generalizations enumerate 12 generic dimensions of crisis, as follows:

(1) Crisis is often a turning point in an unfolding sequence of events and actions. (2) Crisis is a situation in which a requirement for action is high among participants. (3) Crisis threatens the goals and objectives of those involved. (4) Crisis is followed by an important outcome whose consequences shape the future of the participants. (5) Crisis consists of the convergence of events that results in a new set of circumstances. (6) Crisis produces uncertainties in assessing a situation and in formulating alternatives for dealing with it. (7) Crisis reduces control over events and their effects. (8) Crisis heightens urgency, which often produces stress and anxiety among participants. (9) Crisis is a circumstance in which information available to participants is unusually inadequate. (10) Crisis increases time pressures for those involved. (11) Crisis is marked by changes in the relations among participants. (12) Crisis raises tensions among participants, especially in political crises involving nations.³⁾

From the general theory of systems standpoint,⁴⁾ crisis means qualitative changes within the system. Something new appears in the system and something old disappears, i.e., change is a major criteria of crisis. Crises are divided into 2 basic groups: destructive and constructive crises. Usually, crises are associated with destructive processes, although destruction is not absolute. Destruction of one system is often, if not always, followed by construction of another one. Destructive changes within the system generate the emergence of new elements. All crises are featured by a conflict between old and new systems of control, operation and administration. An extraordinarily increasing diversity within the system is another important characteristic of crisis. Some types of crises are manageable. It is also possible to manage through crisis, for example «shock therapy»

economic policy which was implemented in Eastern European countries and in Russia in the end of the 1980s - the beginning of 1990s.

To sum up, modern approaches to describing crisis viewed it as : a) Necessary and to a certain extent unavoidable momentum in system's progressive development ; b) Both destructive and constructive in terms of its types of ongoing changes and outcomes ; c) A turning point, a phase, a relatively short period of unstable state of affairs in a supposedly stable system ; d) A situation which requires an urgent action leading to a decisive change despite uncertainties, growing uncontrollability and inadequate information available ; e) A rather «typical» phenomenon in contemporary social life affecting various spheres, i.e., political crisis, economic crisis, value crisis, educational crisis, etc.

Focusing on educational crisis, it should be noted, that «educational crisis» is a somewhat new expression. This term is usually not applied to describing the changes in education which occurred in the past. Numerous reconstructions of the old educational systems and the appearance of new ones were not associated with crisis. However, since the late 1960s which were marked by Philip Coombs' publication of «The World Educational Crisis : A Systems Analysis», 1968, it is widely accepted that contemporary state of education is undergoing a phase of crisis. If so, if educational crisis really exists, how does it fit the criteria of crisis theory stated above ? What are the indicators of crisis, from the methodological point of view, in American, Japanese and Russian education at the end of the 20th century ?

Crisis threatens the goals and objectives of those involved (3). In the USA, historically, education is not a federal function. Nevertheless, the Congress of the United States of America adopted a law – «Goals 2000 : Educate America Act» – which set up 8 major goals in American education to be achieved by the year 2000. These goals are known as National Education Goals. According to the National Education Goals, the main goal of school education in that country is described in the following passage : «By the year 2000, all students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy.»⁵⁾

As a matter of fact, a substantial amount of American students do not get adequate education. «Nationally, 40 percent of fourth graders performed below the basic level on the reading assessment, as did 30 percent of eighth graders and 25 percent of twelfth graders»⁶⁾, - those are the findings of the federally funded National Assessment of Educational Progress. The results of the 1994 history assessment showed that 57 percent of high school seniors scored «below basic» (that is, below the lowest achievement level).⁷⁾ According to the 1993 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), surprisingly large numbers of two- and four-year college graduates are unable, in everyday situations, to use basic skills involving reading, writing, computation, and elementary problem solving. (p. 10) In the area of quantitative skills, for example, 56.3 percent of American-born, four-year college graduates are unable to CONSISTENTLY perform simple tasks, such as calculating the change from \$3 after buying a 60 cent bowl of soup and a \$1.95 sandwich. (p. 11).⁸⁾ 20 percent of American adults

are estimated as functionally illiterate, while another 34 percent of American adults are only marginally literate.⁹⁾ This data shows, that in general, American students are not educated properly, while underskilled teachers can not deliver education of a high quality. The important functions of education, such as transformation of knowledge and bringing up responsible citizens are under threat.

Article 26 of the Constitution of Japan requires that «All people shall have the right to receive an equal education corresponding to their ability, as provided by law. The people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.»¹⁰⁾ The main goals and objectives of the Japanese education are also reflected in The Fundamental Law of Education: «Education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of people, sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labour, have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with an independent spirit, as builders of the peaceful state and society.»¹¹⁾

In reality, the legally established foundations of education in Japan do not work properly in contemporary society. As Prof. Horio puts it, the problem of equality in Japanese education is far away from the constitutional characteristic: «Our youth are being selected on the "objective" basis of standard deviation (hensachi) and sent along to our "diversified" and hierarchically ranked upper secondary schools. The result is that differences in quality among secondary schools have widened sharply. As secondary schools are polarized into those designed to prepare students for entrance to elite universities and those organized to educate those classified as non-achievers, the democratic ideal of a unified secondary school education has disappeared, and secondary education itself sinks deeper and deeper into a dangerous and destructive morass.»¹²⁾ And, further, «Schools were ranked in a clearly demarcated hierarchy, and thereafter made to function as if they were factories to which the work of sorting out and classifying human beings had been subcontracted.»¹³⁾ In another observation of Japanese education Prof. Horio noticed, that the Japanese Government in alliance with business circles has an intention to create a new elite whose members «who will have been identified at a very early stage, will no longer have to endure the permanent cramming this involves. For them, the government foresees the creation of a single stream from the beginning to the end of secondary school.»¹⁴⁾ Equality in Japanese education is also questioned in the way that neither students, nor their parents have a possibility for free choice of school. Moreover, within the school, student's academic achievements as well as their character and behavior are ranked according to pre-established percentage. This practice does not only violate the rights of a child; it makes the evaluation system to intentionally produce and reproduce inequality that is «essentially anti-educational.»¹⁵⁾ Despite the proclamation that compulsory education shall be free, in fact, parents have to bear indirect (in some cases direct) expenses related to education. The 1994 Research on Educational Expenses for Children conducted by Monbushou estimates annual parents' expenses per child as 311,948 yen for a pupil of public elementary school and 444,465 yen for a pupil of public junior high school.¹⁶⁾ Different surveys conducted by non-governmental organizations put the figure of actual parental educational spending between 11 and 22 million yen per child who is involved in the educational process from kindergarten to university.¹⁷⁾ According to Prof. Horio, «the increasingly costly education considered as a consumer commodity of which only watered-down ersatz versions

will be offered to lower-income strata of society.»¹⁸⁾ In the 1990s, the principle of compulsory education was questioned by growing numbers of school refusal, non-attendance¹⁹⁾ and the development of alternative forms of education.

The aim of education in Japan once defined as «the full development of personality... imbued with an independent spirit» is not carried out in practice. Mass education in Japan is, generally speaking, anti-personal; it favors dependency rather than independent spirit. Marxist critics of the Japanese education consider that «The current crisis in education is expressed most seriously by the collapse of juvenile personality. Children have lost their childlike qualities and in place of these we increasingly find the apathetic student syndrome, with its associated attitudes: spiritlessness, lack of concern, insensibility, lack of sympathy and irresponsibility.»²⁰⁾ They characterize education in Japan as “control-oriented education” which fosters “selfless individualism”.²¹⁾ On the other hand, «Those who express their own individuality and have their own ideas to express are blamed for breaking up the harmony of the group and are ostracized.»²²⁾ School life overregulated with detailed school rules and corporal punishments which often occur in schools are viewed as destructive to the formation of an independent spirit.²³⁾ Since the 1960s, it has been numerously reported that the negative phenomenon in education caused physical and mental distortion of the children²⁴⁾ instead of making them “sound in mind and body”. The authors of the report on the rights of the child came to a conclusion, that «Children are driven by the competitive school entrance examination and the education based on rote and they often lose self-confidence. Such a situation results in an increase in various problems such as psychosomatic disease, drug abuse, school refusal, anorexia and Bulimia and so on.»²⁵⁾ The authors also mentioned new for the Japanese children, school-related physiological and psychological anomalies such as “short-winded syndrome”, “burnt-out syndrome” and “school children syndrome”.²⁶⁾ Japanese children lack responsibility in their daily lives. According to surveys, 46% of the children cannot get up in the morning by themselves, 56% do not clean their rooms and 36% never cooked food by themselves.²⁷⁾ Children’s involvement in labor activities is declining.²⁸⁾

Thus, the goals and objectives of education in Japan which were set up by the fundamental laws are under threat. The costs of education are going up while the opportunities for equality in education are going down. The development of personality took a wrong direction. A growing gap in teacher-student relations, school violence, examination “hell”, inadequate and outdated university education, - those and other symptoms of educational crisis in Japan lead to a pessimistic conclusion: «The entire nation now suspects that the traditional school education system, with Tokyo university at the top of the pyramid, has already collapsed.»²⁹⁾

In the second half of the 1980s and in the 1990s, Russia was involved in the transition from totalitarian society and closed economy to the so called “open society”. The goals and objectives of education in the post-communist society were formulated by state laws and federal programs. Education was defined as a process of upbringing (vosпитание) and teaching aimed to the interests of a person, society and the state, and followed by a statement of the achieved level of education (educational census) established by the governmental authorities.³⁰⁾ Article 1 of The Law of the Russian Federation on Education stated that «The Russian Federation proclaims the sphere of education as a priority one.»³¹⁾ The aim of reforms in education are seen as the following: to ensure the constitu-

tional rights, freedoms and interests of the citizens in education, to adjust the system of education to modern requirements of an individual, society and the state and to create preconditions for further development of the educational system taking into account its traditions and, combining state, public and private initiatives to significantly improve a preparation of new generations to life and labor activities in a democratic civil society based on a market economy.³²⁾

The first signs of educational deformations in the former USSR became obvious in the 1980s. Education, officially proclaimed as compulsory, was not delivered to 4 million completely illiterate adults.³³⁾ According to a leading Soviet expert in comparative education, Zoya Mal'kova, dozens of millions of adults living in the USSR should be considered functionally illiterate if internationally recognized methods of evaluation are applied.³⁴⁾ The quality of secondary education was decreasing because teachers were forced to achieve a 100% student graduation rate. At the same time, dragging and nepotism widely spread in the institutions of higher education on the one hand, and the illegal industry of cramming which annual profit was estimated equal to the government spending on education,³⁵⁾ on the other hand, de-valued the idea of university education.

During perestroika and the post-perestroika period, the situation was made worse by acquiring some new dimensions. A relatively high level of mass education achieved in the former USSR was lost in the end of 1980s - the beginning of 1990s. In the late 1950s the IQ of the Soviet youth was ranked the 3rd in the world, but in 1987 it had dropped to 57th in the world. If in 1982 the students from the Soviet schools were among the winners at international competitions (olympiady), in the 1990s they took only 8th-9th positions.³⁶⁾ It is estimated, that the average level of education in Russia is 3 to 4 years less compared to advanced industrialized nations.³⁷⁾

In the Soviet era, education was supposed to carry out a function of bringing up members of society imbued with a communist spirit (*kommunisticheskoe vospitanie*). After the breakdown of the USSR "*kommunisticheskoe vospitanie*" is not put on the agenda anymore. It is replaced with ideologically neutral and meaningfully empty goals of *vospitanie*: civic consciousness, a positive attitude towards labor (*trudolyubie*), respect to human rights and freedom, a feeling of love to nature, motherland and family.³⁸⁾ However, those values were not clarified and the ways of their transformation to new generations in connection with the educational process, were not worked out. In the atmosphere of moral, ideological and spiritual vacuum that occurred in the present day, the Russian educational system not longer affects the process of formation of moral and spiritual values. The separation of education from moral sphere is among one of the major reasons that caused an increase in the rates of juvenile crime,³⁹⁾ child prostitution,⁴⁰⁾ alcoholism,⁴¹⁾ and school dropouts.⁴²⁾

The contemporary state of education in Russia does not make a proper contribution to the development of children's health and physical abilities. From 30-to-40% of all school students need some kind of correction and / or rehabilitation programs.⁴³⁾ In the 1995 / 1996 school year, 85% of high school graduates had health anomalies.⁴⁴⁾ According to Lev Kofman, the General Director of physical education for Moscow, only 4% of Moscow school children were considered absolutely healthy in 1993.⁴⁵⁾

Despite the government's declarations to consider the sphere of education as a priority one, the actual state of affairs has been worsened since the beginning of perestroika. In the 1970s-1980s the

budget spending on education was 11-to-13 percent of its total. In 1996 this figure dropped to 3.6%, while the real budget itself has become twice less than before.⁴⁶⁾ The educational institutions are underfinanced by at least 50%. Schools are cut off from electricity and water supply.⁴⁷⁾ The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation estimates, that 33.9% of public schools and 34% of preschool establishments should be basically renewed and reconstructed as soon as possible.⁴⁸⁾ In general, more school buildings are ruining than there are in reconstruction or newly built. If this trend is likely to continue, there will be no buildings by the year of 2016 to teach in.⁴⁹⁾

The goals and objectives of those involved in the educational process in Russia are under serious threat. A significant amount of students are left stranded from education. The quality of education is getting worse. The material and financial foundations of education are collapsing. Millions of school students are not provided with textbooks, while their teachers irregularly get an average salary which makes only 65% of the minimum wage.⁵⁰⁾ As it was summed up by the Russian Parliament (Gosudarstvennaya Duma), the constitutional right of the citizens of the Russian Federation to education is not exercised in its basic parts.⁵¹⁾

**Crisis consists of the convergence of events that results in a new set of circumstances (5).
Crisis is often a turning point in an unfolding sequence of events and actions (1)**

The end of the 1960s and three decades after that, were marked by significant changes in American society. The development of new technologies, especially computers and telecommunications, diversified the society itself and altered the role of education in it. Because of the revolutionary shift in the modes of communication, a new set of circumstances has come into being. Reflecting on the epochal change which Americans are experiencing now, William Wishard noted, «In education we must ask whether kids are being torn between two different modes of knowledge transmission - print and electronic knowledge transmission... Children have always defined themselves by drawing contrasts with animals. Now, brought up with computers and computerized toys, some kids define themselves in relation to the computer. Adolescents are struggling to find their identity, not in relationship to their families or the world around them, but in relation to video games and computers.»⁵²⁾ Indeed, «A 1992 NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] report on reading ability found that many American children read fewer than 11 pages a day at home or in school and cannot capably analyze and interpret what they do read. They do, however, watch lots of TV. A quarter of fourth graders, for example, watched the tube more than six hours a day; 40 percent of twelfth-graders watched more than three hours a day.»⁵³⁾

Family, as a social institution, is being challenged in contemporary American society. «Sixty percent of the children born in the 1980s will live in a home with only one parent before they reach the age of 18».⁵⁴⁾ As a result, the traditional type of family is breaking down and parents' influence on their children is getting lower. «According to statistics gathered for the 1997 Phi Delta Kappa / Gallup poll of education, 56 percent of parents reported spending three or more hours per week during the school year helping their oldest child with his or her homework. This represented a huge increase from 1986, when only 21 percent of parents showed that level of involvement.»⁵⁵⁾ Despite a remarkable increase in the percentage of parents who are personally concerned with their child's

education, only every second kid in America gets some kind of assistance from adults at home. Moreover, data obtained from the U.S. Education Department's 1993 National Household Education Survey shows that «Parents' involvement in their children's education drops off sharply after elementary school...»⁵⁶⁾

Internationalization and globalization influenced American society in the last 2 decades. The American «political and business leaders have called for a new emphasis on "international education", by which is meant a knowledge on the world beyond our borders and specifically: world history, international politics and economics, global geography, and foreign languages.»⁵⁷⁾ Meanwhile, «The average American student starts learning a foreign language at age 14, six years after the average student in Austria, France, or Russia...»⁵⁸⁾ Several years ago «only 15 percent of [U.S.] high school students study a foreign language, and a minuscule 2 percent pursue one for more than two years.»⁵⁹⁾ According to the results of a study conducted by the Modern Language Association (MLA), «The percentage of all college undergraduates engaged in any level of formal foreign language study was actually slightly lower in the fall of 1995 (7.6 percent) than it was in the late '70s, and less than half of what it was 30 years ago. Even more disturbing, the majority of students who do study a foreign language do so for only two or three semesters; thus few of them ever reach a level of communicative ability useful to their professional and personal lives.»⁶⁰⁾ Gallup's 1988 survey found out that, «From outline maps, the average American can identify only four of twelve European countries, less than three of eight South American countries, and less than six of ten U.S. states.»⁶¹⁾ Other studies show that, «Given the Vietnam War, it is unsettling that 63% of our high school seniors could not locate Southeast Asia on a world map. 64% did not know Saudi Arabia's location, although this was before the Persian Gulf War.»⁶²⁾

One of the most important changes that affected American society is a widespread confusion about existing values and common meanings⁶³⁾ followed by a culturally deconstructive, «sustained attack on traditional American values and the place where those values had long had a comfortable and congenial home - the school.»⁶⁴⁾ Multiculturalism, "situational ethics" and "deconstructionism" offered a bizarre and destructive vision of reality which brainwashed a generation of Americans.⁶⁵⁾ On the other side, a new "postindustrial paradigm",⁶⁶⁾ that should supposedly replace the old one, is not set up yet, because of the lack of consensus. American education must make its choice on new values and paradigms, but educational institutions are either reluctant to change or accept it in a very diversified and eclectic manner. Most of the critics of the American education agree that, «America needs citizens who are flexible, who embrace new ideas, who can reason well when faced with complex ideas and who are capable of self-directed learning.»⁶⁷⁾ Thus, the educational system reached a turning point, but the direction of its further move is highly debatable.

Similar to the USA, Japan meets the 21st century in the information-technological environment. As it was stated by the Central Council for Education: «We [the Japanese] are moving toward a society that is adapted to the growth of information-oriented phenomena, and the dissemination of the Internet, multi-media-type computers, portable telephones and many more devices are rapidly changing the pattern of our life-styles in ways that transcend the bounds of our imagination.»⁶⁸⁾ The rapid growth of the information-oriented society brought significant changes affecting society in general,

and the sphere of education in particular. «The changes symbolized in such keywords as internationalization, informatization, deregulation and administrative reform, show that Japan is now struggling to change fundamentally the basic structure that supported its rapid progress for more than one hundred years.»,⁶⁹⁾ remarked recently a leading Japanese expert on educational crisis in Japan.

Education became longer and more intensified. This process seems to be logical for a rising information society. In 1996, 96.8% of the children were enrolled in upper secondary school.⁷⁰⁾ According to a Monbushou 1993 «Survey on Juku and Related Matters,” 76.9% of elementary school children and 28.3% of lower secondary school students attended private classes. The figures for juku attendance were 23.6% at the elementary school level and 59.5% at the lower secondary school level.»⁷¹⁾ Almost 50% of 18-year olds (46.2% in 1996) enter university⁷²⁾ and approximately the same number of adults are involved in learning activities.⁷³⁾ It is clearly seen that Japanese education was expanded and intensified by the end of this century.

However, the expansion and intensification of education led to arising of some new crucial problems. By extending their education, Japanese children suffer from overstudying at school level and get a relaxed ersatz version of education at university level. Because of overstudying and excessive competition at school, children are artificially alienated from nature and from natural human relations such as playing, friendship, and sharing time with their parents. The number of high school drop-outs is on a steady increase within the last years.⁷⁴⁾ Even such measures as an implementation of a 5 day school week suggested by the Ministry of Education may result in an additional burden on pupils if the curriculum left unchanged. Many students feel themselves psychologically suppressed by the so called examination “hell” which they experience during entrance examinations at high school and at university. But once they get into a university, students tend to give up studying and devote themselves to leisure activities. The Japanese universities are often described as «not very demanding for the masses of undergraduate students»⁷⁵⁾ and they gained a low international reputation.⁷⁶⁾

The educational system of Japan perfectly fitted the demands of industrial society. It produced well educated masses of industrial workers and sorted the elite (mostly managers and bureaucrats) as a byproduct of its social selection function. Standardized knowledge chosen by the Monbushou was distributed throughout the country in a standardized manner approved by the Monbushou. Education was passive and characterized by a “quantitative attitude towards everything”.⁷⁷⁾ A standardized person was the major goal and the actual outcome of this standardized system.

In the 1980s, and then again in the second half of the 1990s, it became clear that the existing educational system does not meet the requirements of an evolving postindustrial society. The knowledge itself seems to be very diversified and nobody has a monopoly on it. A standardized person, “one-dimensional man” satisfies neither industry / business, nor himself / herself. It was stated that due to drastic societal changes, children, as well as family and community organized adults lost “room to grow”.⁷⁸⁾ Indeed, life has changed, but certain institutions and old-fashioned values have been left unchanged. New circumstances confront new challenges to the individuals who should seek creative thinking instead of acquiring obsolete knowledge of facts and figures, and they should rely on their independent personality rather than on various forms of social dependency. The Central Council on Education underlines that «The ability to think and make judgments on the basis of

circumstances at any given time therefore becomes increasingly important. Furthermore, with the growth of an information-oriented society with the development of multi-media, access to knowledge and sources of information becomes much easier and there is a stronger demand for creativity which will generate new things of value by using the knowledge and information at one's disposal.»⁷⁹⁾

Contrary to new challenges posed by the "information-oriented society", the educational system is unenthusiastic about the ongoing outside changes and innovations inside the system. Education at school level is based on the examination-oriented standardized tests, which are nothing more than the educational tools to measure memory. «To take just such tests is what Japanese pupils are trained for from elementary school to high school. However, if the test were to evaluate say, the ability to draw conclusions, to abstract from facts, to connect abstractions, to organize one's thought in an essay, to express oneself in another language or just the ability to ask questions, they would reveal where the Japanese education system is deficient.»⁸⁰⁾ remarked Wolferen. Recent studies show that examinations and examination-oriented memorization are among the factors which may inhibit creativity.⁸¹⁾ «The examination system may screen out creative individuals whose interests or abilities are uneven across domains or whose particular creative abilities are not the target of the testing.» - that is another negative impact of examinations on the process of achievement measurement. The testing system with examination "hell" on its top is oriented towards credentialism and grading. «Don't talk in Japan of education, but about techniques to get better marks... They [the Japanese] can only see education in terms of a drive to get better marks, as that makes you a better person. ... Better marks mean greater happiness, while after university it's better money means greater happiness.» said Kenji Sakemoto, Executive Director of ECC's Open Campus Centre in Osaka.⁸²⁾ «A drive to get better marks" is manifested in excessive competition in schools which is followed by socio-psychological shock frequently expressed in forms of bullying, school refusal, school violence and so forth. Examination, as it is practiced in Japan, is one of the dimensions of uniformity. It stops diversity.⁸³⁾ A distinguished Japanese journalist Kinji Kawamura noted: «We increasingly feel that there is too much cramming, too much work, too much conformity and too much standardization in our schools. A key ongoing debate was whether we should make education free of all rules and similar restrictions, but this has been opposed by the traditionalists who argue that you cannot avoid minimum requirements.⁸⁴⁾ Creative thinking is a product of an individual or a group of individuals. Meantime, a position of The Central Council for Education regarding individuality is somehow ambiguous. «In the education of the future - it says - we consider that we want children to be able to manifest freely their personality and at the same time assimilate those "unchanging values that transcend different ages".»⁸⁵⁾ What are those "unchanging values that transcend different ages"? They are not specified. Some authors found out a connection between the present educational system and the "saddest legacy of *goningumi*»,⁸⁶⁾ a traditional system of social and behavioral control that suppressed personality and individuality. Implementation of this system, which effectively stretched through the ages, resulted in the «suffocation of millions of creative, energetic, independent, self-propelled minds.»⁸⁷⁾ Another block of problems with introducing new ways of thinking and acting into school life is associated with teaching staff. A British researcher of Japanese education, Michael Stephens, quoted his Japanese collocutor: «It is difficult to introduce individualism into Japanese

schools as the teachers do not know what it means.»⁸⁸⁾ A generation gap is also an obstacle for further progress in restructuring the education system. The youth, that is both a subject and an object of education has changed, but institutions and their representatives remained unchanged.⁸⁹⁾ «According to a 1987 national survey of 2,698 junior high school teachers, the rigidly enforced rules in Japanese schools are supported by 86 percent of teachers. Ninety-five percent of these teachers believed that disorderly attire was akin to mental disorder, and the same number concluded that “non-allowed hairstyles and delinquency are interrelated.” Another 68 percent thought that the school should control the kind of socks that students wore, and 38 percent felt that the gloves allowed should be controlled... Eighty percent of the teachers in this survey said that their schools had strict regimentation [kanri kyoiku]...»⁹⁰⁾ School rules imposed on school children violate their human rights and set up artificial barriers on the way to express themselves freely and to get access to various kinds of information.⁹¹⁾ Corporal punishment, that 20% of school children received⁹²⁾ breaks their personality. In addition to corporal punishment, «there is also the hidden form of control resulting from educational evaluation in the form of report cards and naishinsho documents.»⁹³⁾ The long-established policy of “student tutelage” (seito shido) enters the sphere of schoolchildren’s self-control and self-discipline.⁹⁴⁾ The policies described above represent the legacy of traditional education. If enforced, they destroy creativity and originality and even may result in the misinterpretation of reality as, «Demands for behavioral conformity and low valuation of originality may socialize Japanese children away from original approaches to schoolwork.»⁹⁵⁾

Deregulation is one of the key issues in today’s Japanese politics. It affects various spheres of public life including education. Privatization of higher education is discussed in regard to a new situation where «overseas models do not provide a clear objective.»⁹⁶⁾ The decision on privatization in higher education must be carefully thought out before it becomes final, advocates a Japanese researcher of higher education, Akira Arimoto. He argues that «The policy of weakening national control and strengthening market logic will require much more attention before it can be realized with regard to quality, excellence, and freedom especially by virtue of the reinforcement, conflict, and dilemma that exists between control and freedom.»⁹⁷⁾ Privatization is bound to the policy of weakening state control over education, but the Monbushou still holds the main administrative functions in its hands.⁹⁸⁾ Several recently suggested innovations to improve university education such as the contract system, strengthening education instead of research, reform of undergraduate education, met resistance from university teaching staff.⁹⁹⁾ Because of the changing business climate Japanese companies advance new demands to university graduates. Previously, the «people’s real aim was often to gain entrance to universities for a diploma, which was a ticket to employment in a large company after graduation, rather than to acquire good training during their study at university.»¹⁰⁰⁾ A recently started «new trend shows that employers are going to pay much more attention to examining the quality of scholarship gained through the 4 year educational process than to the “hensachi” score gained at the university entrance examination. ...Some companies are already abolishing the “shiteiko”(designated schools) system (universities designated by enterprises in recruitment) and ignoring the alma mater of candidates at the point of recruitment - probably because they cannot win in an international or even a national competition without introducing such innovations.»¹⁰¹⁾ Thus,

Japanese universities are expected to deal with a new set of urgent issues which forces them to enter the reform phase.

Internationalization, while being crucial for overcoming traditional Japanese isolationism, is not new for Japan. Hiroshi Kawanari counts the current trend towards internationalization as Boom No. 3.¹⁰²⁾ Perhaps, the main reason which caused this boom is economic globalization. People working at the global marketplace have to find a common language for communication. Nowadays English plays this role. The Japanese program of internationalization includes the improvement of foreign language education at both school and university levels. Up to now, it is not very effective because university entrance examinations require written tests instead of oral communication ability. Studying foreign languages abroad is not necessarily fruitful for Japanese students.¹⁰³⁾ Foreign students coming to study in Japan constitute a small proportion of university students (In 1996 55,442 foreign students of 2,596,667 total were registered at Japanese universities, most of them came from Asia.)¹⁰⁴⁾ The university concept of internationalization was criticized as "inappropriate"¹⁰⁵⁾ and the governmental program in this field gained a reputation as imperialistic.¹⁰⁶⁾ There are also some marked changes in relations between family orientations and lifestyles on the one hand, and education on the other hand. Due to specific labor conditions in Japan, fathers usually did not play any significant role in their children's upbringing. This role, especially since the Meiji Era, belonged to women who were supposed to act as educational mamas.¹⁰⁷⁾ But at present, according to surveys conducted by governmental agencies family orientations are changing. It was recognized that the power of the home in education has declined.¹⁰⁸⁾ At the same time, from 66.5% to 89.4% of respondents of all age groups over 20 answered 'yes' to a question «Should men change their job-centered lifestyle by putting job and home on an equal basis, participating in child-raising, education and leading a fulfilling home life?»¹⁰⁹⁾ Other surveys, conducted among young women, «found that 96.7 percent of the women who responded who were then working intended to keep working after marriage. Of those not working, 82.5 percent wanted to find a work.¹¹⁰⁾ Family role in education, particularly in home education, is shifting towards a more or less European-oriented model, but the formal education system did not find an adequate response to those changes.

Being challenged in many ways, Japanese educators are seeking the best solution for the problems occurred. Governmental vision of the future of education in Japan is controverted by academic circles and non-governmental organizations. It is obvious that education has reached a turning point in its development, but the direction of anticipated turn is not clear, yet.

Nowadays, Russia experiences a kind of double transition: a) from totalitarian Soviet regime to a post-totalitarian one; b) from industrial to postindustrial society. Those rapid changes altered the state of education. New educational policy, although not officially specified, was adopted and implemented.

The government actually rejected a priority in financing the education. This decision became very dangerous to some components of the educational system. For example, pre-school education was almost destroyed. The number of children in pre-school establishments went down to 5.6 million in 1995 compared to 9 million in 1990.¹¹¹⁾ Post-Soviet education was "decommunized" and to a certain extent depoliticized and deideologized. Ideologically fed subjects were taken off the educa-

tional system. Anticommunism replaced communist propaganda. Both students and teachers got free access to information and now enjoy a freedom of expression.

Privatization and marketization of education rapidly spread among institutions. 525 non-governmental (private ?) schools were officially registered in the 1995 / 1996 school year.¹¹²⁾ It is estimated that there were around 300 private universities operating in Russia by the beginning of the 1997 / 1998 academic year.¹¹³⁾ Educational institutions received the right to start commercial activities. In 1995, 229,000 students attended institutions of higher education paying the full costs of the education.¹¹⁴⁾ As of 1997, the costs of education in a Moscow-based private school varied from \$200 to \$2000 a month and in a prestigious university, from \$500 to \$5000 a year.¹¹⁵⁾ The State Universities of the Russian Federation are supposed to earn money by themselves, i.e., to get basic funds outside government financing. In some cases, public schools impose additional charges on parents,¹¹⁶⁾ while there were also uncovered some facts about providing privileges to children for entrance into pre-school establishments whose parents had a higher income.¹¹⁷⁾ Diversification of education was a positive response of the educational system to outside changes. New forms of public schools - lyceums and gymnasiums - offered various types of learning. 1282 lyceums and gymnasiums were registered in 1995.¹¹⁸⁾ More than 100 subjects were added to the school curriculum.

Deregulation and decentralization of education was viewed as a stimulus for self-development of educational institutions.¹¹⁹⁾ Schools, universities and local authorities obtained legal rights to conduct a policy of self-regulation.

Trying to adjust to new challenges, Russian educators and governmental officials seriously discussed the proposals for reform. As a first result of these discussions, The Conception of the Next Stage of Reforms of the Educational System was offered to public discussion in 1998. An observer of Russian education, Joseph Zajda pointed out that, «In the present "frontier-style" society that has developed a Russia, with its aggressive and sometimes exploiting drive toward privatization and the market economy and a neglect of individual needs and rights, there is a desperate search for a new paradigm in schooling for the world of the year 2000.»¹²⁰⁾ The other dimensions of crisis, while not being always exposed to all 3 countries, provide us with insightful data for cross-country analysis.

Crisis is marked by changes in the relations among participants (11). Those changes are more typical and similar in the USA and Japan, than to those in Russia. In both countries they are expressed in forms of growing alienation of 'participants' in the educational process from each other : school violence between American students and bullying in Japan, teachers attacked by students, and corporal punishment in Japanese schools. Contrary to Japan and America, there is no clear evidence of growing alienation between participants on a personal level in Russian schools. But there is an obvious tendency to alienation on institutionalized level, e.g. between education and the state.

Crisis raises tensions among participants, especially in political crises involving nations (12). Educational crisis is not a political one. Usually, it does not produce tensions among nations. However, educational issues are put on the political agenda in 3 countries. In the USA they are used in debates between Republicans and Democrats. In particular, the Republicans were trying to turn the taxpayers attention to overspending their money on education by the Clinton administration. Some academics and non-governmental organizations in Japan estimate the current state of education

as a violation of human rights. Communists and leftist political groups in Russia attempted to put pressure on the government by initiating debates on education and national security.

Crisis is a situation in which a requirement for action is high among participants (2). Crisis heightens urgency, which often produces stress and anxiety among participants (8). Crisis increases time pressures for those involved (10). Educational crisis is not similar to war crisis. The level of urgency is comparatively low. But non-action in the situation of educational crisis may negatively affect significant parts of normal social life and social order. For example, functional illiteracy, declining public schools and underachievement of American students in the international evaluation of achievements tests were recognized as a threat to national security. School violence also requires some urgent action. In Japan, the current state of education is associated with a mental and physical burden which it puts on children, hence dangerous for the health of the young generation. Increasingly reported cases of school violence provoked a necessity for immediate remedies in education. Similar to the USA, Russian education was viewed as reaching the level that threatens national security. A high rate of school non-attendance, underfinancing of public education, weak children at school - those symptoms of educational and social systems disease need quick treatment.

Crisis produces uncertainties in assessing a situation and in formulating alternatives for dealing with it (6) Crisis reduces control over events and their effects. (7) Crisis is a circumstance in which information available to participants is unusually inadequate. (9)

Those features differ from country to country. In America, there was a book entitled "The Manufactured Crisis: Myths, Fraud and Attack on America's public schools.", 1995, by David Berliner and Bruce Biddle, in which the authors proved that educational crisis is a right-wing fabrication. The ordinary forms of control on education such as money, public administration or self-regulation are no longer valid in the USA. In Japan, for example, the reasons for a of high increase in school violence are not quite clear. The Japanese Ministry of Education on the one hand, and non-governmental organizations on the other hand, use different approaches and different statistics in their evaluation of the current state of affairs in education. Data obtained from Russian sources is very confusing. For instance, during Russian parliament hearings on the state of education, a rate of school non-attendance was estimated as 1.5 million students, 200,000 students, 2 million students and nobody, including the Minister of Education, could confirm which figure is right.¹²¹⁾ In some cases data varies so much that it is impossible to identify whether a certain part of educational life is in crisis or progressing.

As we have seen, the state of affairs in the field of education in three countries demonstrates the most important characteristics of crisis. Change is the constant which is peculiar to America, Japan, and Russia. The direction of change is still unclear. It is also unclear whether negatively perceived changes could be stopped or turned into a likely direction. The theory and practice of educational reforms should help us to find possible solutions.

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- 11) Ibid., p. 9.
- 12) Horio, Teruhisa. Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan. State Authority and Educational Freedom. Tokyo : University of Tokyo Press, 1990, p. 299.
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- 14) Horio, Teruhisa and Sabouret, Jean-Francois. Education in Japan : The Issues at Stake at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. P. 54.
- 15) Horio, Teruhisa. Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan. P. 291.
- 16) Data obtained from "How to Overcome ? The Loss of Childhood in a Rich Society, Japan. Uniform Report to CRC from NGOs and Citizens", 1997, vol. II, p. 208.
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- 18) Horio, Teruhisa and Sabouret, Jean-Francois. Education in Japan : The Issues at Stake at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. P. 60.
- 19) In 1995 Monbushou registered 81, 735 cases of school refusal and non-attendance. See Statistical Abstract of Education, Science, Sports and Culture. Monbusho, 1997, p. 27. But, «According to citizen, and NGOs, and parents groups who are involved in the problem, it could be 4 to 5 times more. Furthermore, the specialists in this field say that 70% to 80% of all students have a tendency to school refusal.» Cited from "How to Overcome ? The Loss of Childhood in a Rich Society, Japan. Uniform Report to CRC from NGOs and Citizens", 1997, vol. II, p. 233.
- 20) Katsuhiko Hosio, Norio Iwashashi with Brian Pinkstone. Educational Devastation and the Crisis in Japan. // Capitalist Crisis and Schooling. Melbourne : The Macmillan Company of Australia, 1986, p.77.
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- 23) See, for example, Schoolland, Ken. *Shogun's Ghost: The Dark Side of Japanese Education*. New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1990, pp. 19–36; 49–62. "How to Overcome? The Loss of Childhood in a Rich Society, Japan. Uniform Report to CRC from NGOs and Citizens", 1997, vol. II, pp. 244–248; 256–261.
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- 40) According to Kolesnikov, 1997, Ibid., child prostitution in Russia increased at 6000% in the last years.
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- bilizatsii i razvitiya sistemy obrazovaniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 1996 / 1997 uchebnyi god. // "Pervoe sentyabrya." August 15, 1996. Dokumenty, p. 2. In the school year of 1994 / 1995 this figure has increased to 1.7 million. See Zhivi i znai, p. 39. As of December 1994, 793, 783 children of 7–13 years old age group were not involved in any form of education. Ibid., pp. 54–55. 2% of secondary school graduates do not continue their education. Osnovnye itogi, problemy i puti razvitiya rossiiskogo obrazovaniya. 1996 god. Moscow : Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, 1996, p. 142.
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 - 46) Kolesnikov, 1997, Ibid.
 - 47) Obrazovanie i natsional'naya bezopasnost' Rossii. Rekomendatsii parlamentskikh slushanii. 21 maya 1996 goda. In "Pervoe sentyabrya." August 15, 1996. Dokumenty, p. 1.
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 - 49) Zhivi i znai. Belaya kniga detstva i obrazovaniya v Rossii. Moskva : Miros, 1995, p. 56.
 - 50) See Informatsiya o khode vypolneniya Federal'noi programmy razvitiya obrazovaniya v chasti doskol'nogo, obshego i nachal'nogo professional'nogo obrazovaniya. // Pedagogika, 1997, vol.1, p. 3.
 - 51) Rekomendatsii parlamentskikh slushanii "O realizatsii konstitutsionnogo prava grazhdan Rossiiskoi Federatsii na obrazovanie." // Obrazovanie v dokumentakh. 1997, vol. 11 (50), pp. 15–20.
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- 63) Talking about changes in contemporary American society, William Wishard noted : «We are experiencing confusion about everything - about the economy, about education, values, sexual roles, the function of a family, about the source of authority, the role of the state, about the wellsprings of freedom, the existence of God ; indeed, about the very meaning of life. We Americans are in the midst of redefining who we are and what an "American" really is. The consequence of this redefinition go right to the core of life, affecting education, culture and individual identity. The old perspectives - group identity, structured authority, progress as "more and more", happiness as the constant accumulation of gadgets, freedom as absence of restraint, progress in terms of technology rather than human aspirations - no longer explain life. They no longer work. So we must first find a new perspective, a new way of viewing everything - ourselves, our work, our institutions, our country.» See Wishard, William. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
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