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CREATING THE CITIZENS OF TOMORROW

A study of the Japanese curriculum
regarding goals in creating “the good citizen”

Joachim Hansen

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Abstract

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Author: Joachim Hansen

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Academic advisor: Martin Nordeborg

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Synopsis:

The main purpose of this thesis is to study what kind of citizen the Japanese curriculum aims to create and what language and words are important in doing so. The research is based on three main materials; First, the Japanese middle- and high school curriculum in civics. Second, two semi-structured interviews (with a civics professor at Tokyo Gakugei University and a civics teacher at a Tokyo elementary school). Third, a moral education pamphlet commissioned by the Japanese Ministry of Education. This thesis is built as an expansion of a study, previously conducted by the author, on comparing the Japanese and Swedish curriculums in their goal of creating national identity.

The results of this thesis show that the Japanese curriculum holds its country's traditional values and culture high and that moral education has taken a more dominant position within civics education. The citizens of Japan are supposed to be hard working, as to contribute to society, to protect the culture and values of Japan, and are expected to coexist with their fellow countrymen. The results of this study also point towards that Japanese citizens should play a more active role in the international community, to further help the Japanese economy and to spread Japanese values abroad. Important words are 在り方生き方, 幸福, 正義, 公正, 伝統, 文化 among others. Most importantly, this thesis shows that the contents of the curriculum are very vague and that the teachers are responsible for interpreting the intertextual meanings of the curriculum contents. The teachers are thus assumed to be part of the cultural hegemony to understand the curriculum.

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1. Prologue

*“Ask not what your country can do for you —
ask what you can do for your country.”*

John F. Kennedy

1.1 Presentation and research motivation

This famous quote by former US President Kennedy has always fascinated me, as it captures the spirit of patriotism. Therefore, I wonder what different shapes the aspect of patriotism takes in different countries. While enrolled in the international student exchange programme at Tokyo Gakugei University in 2014/2015, I was able to discover more on the everyday life in Japan, and the Japanese society struck as a manifestation of Kennedy's quote. For example, one could hear politicians, standing in the streets, giving speeches about working together for the greater good of the country. They could also be seen on the TV, where they used high language to defend the decisions Japan has made on the political scene. Or, for that matter, just by observing the work spirit at different kinds of workplaces, one could see that there was a special feeling to it. The thought that has come to my mind more than once is; “Why do Japanese people place so much effort into this collectivistic thought process, and what made them do it?”

Ever since the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) came back into power in 2012 with Prime Minister Abe as leader, media has been reporting that Japan has taken a turn to the right, with a more nationalistic and hard-line approach to what decisions it has been making.¹ The latest major overhaul of the Japanese curriculum was before that, in 2009, but with amendments made in 2012 by the LDP government. It seems that the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) under the LDP led government is clearly influencing the curriculum to be more focused on traditional values, as well as recasting historical descriptions of Japan in a more “patriotic” way.² As a graduated social science and history teacher, it is interesting to know how the wider aspect of this previously noted phenomenon came to be so firmly incorporated into the Japanese society. Where else than in schools do you form and meld together the citizens of tomorrow?

During my stay in Japan, I conducted a small study on this matter. The study was based on interviews with one civics professor and one civics teacher, as well as a handful more of informal interviews with other teachers at the school. The interviews asked about their view of the Japanese curriculum's goal of national identity. This thesis is meant to continue and expand that study. There are, aside from the aforementioned self-asked question and the previously conducted study, two main reasons for choosing this topic: *the increasingly active nationalistic agenda of Japan* and that *the goal of the national education programme affects the future*.

¹ Jiji Press. “Analyzing Abe's fixation on the Constitution” in *The Japan Times* 2015-07-22.

² Fitzpatrick, Michael. “Japan's Divided Educational Strategy” in *The New York Times* 2014-10-12.

Due to the fact that Japan under Abe has had an increasingly nationalistic agenda, this has set the country on a collision course with its neighbours. The right wing government of Japan and its pro-nationalistic politics has led to rising diplomatic tension in Asia, especially tearing up old wounds in China and Korea.³ Further, Japan also stands at a crossroad, choosing between co-operative vs. competitive globalisation. Will Japan work together with other countries to create a better world, or will it flex its muscles and try to regain some of its lost pride by competing with everyone else?⁴ Also, the greatest tool a government has, for deciding the course the country is going to take in the future, is education. Consequently, expanding the curriculum studies research field is important.

1.2 Research questions

The focus of this study will be on the Japanese middle and high school curriculum. The research questions will be as follows:

- What kind of citizen does the Japanese curriculum want to create, and how is this citizen constructed in the curriculum's text?
- What language and key words are important in the Japanese curriculum and how does it show in the content of the curriculum?

2. Previous research

Regarding research about patriotism, MacIntyre points out that patriotism "[...]is defined in terms of a kind of loyalty to a particular *nation* which only those possessing that particular nationality can exhibit." This is contrasting the dedication to an *ideal* (e.g. the cause of civilisation or freedom, the fight against communism etc.) that anyone can hold, regardless of nationality.⁵ Furthermore, patriotism does generally involve a peculiar regard for the particular characteristics, merits and achievements of one's own nation.⁶

As how to define citizenship, Turner is defining it as a "[...]set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society, and which as a consequence shape the flow of resources to persons and social groups."⁷ Turner argues that these practices are related to different content of social rights and obligations, the form thereof and the social forces that create them. The content of citizenship refers to the nature of the rights and duties of those who hold citizenship. These rights and duties relate individuals to a political community.⁸ He also argues that globalisation is leading to problems regarding the relation between individuals and macro societal structures, as well as nature and the environment.⁹

³ Tepperman, Jonathan. "Asian Tensions and the Problem of History" in *The New York Times* 2013-05-24.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1984. *Is Patriotism a Virtue?* The Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas, p.3

⁶ *ibid.*, p.4

⁷ Turner, Bryan S. 1993. *Citizenship and Social Theory*. SAGE Publications. London, p.2

⁸ *ibid.*, preface p. x

⁹ *ibid.*, p.2

According to Weber and Durkheim, the phenomenon of citizenship is a modern replacement for religion and clan structures. Furthermore, they argue that Christianity played a vital part, as its organised form lay the foundations for community based group structures.¹⁰ This, however, cannot be applied to Japan as it has never been a fully Christian country. This is argued for by Turner, who points out that the way to modernisation, thus the formation of citizenship and self-image, in every country has been different.¹¹

Miller continues the discussion of self-images as he concludes that nations create stereotyped “national characters” – pictures of how a genuine countryman should behave, how he dresses, what aspirations he has and so on. Of course, nobody fits this scheme with complete accuracy, but the variations of the displayed sub-traits of the individuals will manifest a common theme.¹² Continuing the homogenisation tendency, construction of national stories play an important part; “Since it is essential to national identity that we should see ourselves as continuing the work of our ancestors [...] we rewrite history so as to project back our own traits and our own values on to those ancestors.”¹³

Dierkes suggests that the self-image of the Japanese in history textbooks started out seemingly neutral during the US occupation and a few years thereafter. During the 70's and 80's, this image took a turn to the political right, as the so called 日本人論 (*Nihonjin-ron*, theories of Japanese cultural specificity) literature reached its peak. This literature was popular by right-wing politics, that sought to protect the emperor's reputation. Two characteristics of the authors of this literature are the focus upon (ethnic) homogeneity and the concept of “Land = People = Culture = Language”. They also perceive Japanese culture and society as something very distinct from other societies outside Japan.¹⁴ Since the 80's, this school of thought of essentialised Japanese uniqueness has been heavily criticised, both within and outside Japan. It still remains popular and powerful within Japanese academic discourse.¹⁵

Dierkes also argues that the Japanese society still has some lingering pre-modern tendencies in its education sector. It offers “no strong accounts or even arguments for why the developments they observe might be occurring, how they occur, and what or who propels them.”¹⁶ He also writes that “assuming basic differences carried over from pre-modern social structure, all members of the essential groups become carries of their values or attitudes and enact these values in their behavior[sic] and decisions.”¹⁷

¹⁰ Turner, 1993, p.4

¹¹ *ibid.*, p.11

¹² Miller, David. 1996. (Symposium on) *On Nationality*. Clarendon Press. Oxford, p.413

¹³ *ibid.*, p.413-414

¹⁴ Dierkes, Julian. 2010. *Postwar History Education in Japan and the Germanys*. Routledge. New York, p.102-103

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p.103

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p.104

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p.104

Eyal Ben-Ari has made a study on how institutions in Japan (in his case, preschools) standardises children into homogeneity. He argues that, although there are differences in philosophy in the different institutions across Japan, the differences usually only come out as different themes, rather than real changes. This is supposedly due to the teachers' repertoire, memories and own experiences of their childhood. The routines have been so internalised due to being raised to become a citizen of their time, that the teachers have a hard time "thinking outside the box". On top of this, Ben-Ari argues that, through written documents, Japan enforces very strict guidelines on how to raise children. The manoeuvre space thus becomes very limited.¹⁸

3. Research material

This study draws its materials from three sources; the revised 2009 Japanese curriculum for civics for the middle and high schools, two interviews with a professor and a teacher, and a moral education pamphlet.

In 2012 the LDP government, led by prime minister Abe, made amendments to the 2009 curriculum – expanding moral education in preparation for it to become a separate subject in the next curriculum due in 2019. The sections on traditions and Japanese culture were also expanded.¹⁹ Therefore, the first research material of this study is the 2012 amended version of the 2009 Japanese middle and high school civics curriculum: 「新教育課程:公民」 (*Shin kyōiku katei: Kōmin*, New Curriculum: Civic Studies). The curriculum is made up of three sections: 現代社会 (*gendai shakai*, contemporary society), 倫理 (*rinri*, morals) and 政治 (*seiji*, politics) combined with 経済 (*keisai*, economics).

I have focused on the first two sections (contemporary society and morals), as they contain more text regarding citizen construction, rather than the other sections. It should also be noted that due to the size of the study, elements that specifically handle history and religion has been left out, even though that they are part of the "contemporary society" section. This is due to the same reason as with the politics and economics sections.

The "contemporary society" and "morals" sections are further dissected into sub-categories. Under "morals" we find, amongst others, 「人間としての在り方生き方」 (*ningen toshite no arikata ikikata*, the *raison d'être* of mankind) and 「国際社会に生きる日本人としての自覚」 (*kokusai shakai ni ikiru nihonjin to shite no jikaku*, self-awareness as Japanese living in a global society). Under "contemporary society" sub-categories as 「現代社会と人間としての在り方生き方」 (*gendai shakai to ningen to shite arikata ikikata*, contemporary society and the *raison d'être* of mankind) and 「共に生きる社会を目指して」 (*tomo ni ikiru shakai o mezashite*, aiming for a society of coexistence).

¹⁸ Ben-Ari, Eyal in Goodman, Roger, et al. 2002. *Family and Social Policy in Japan*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, p. 120-121

¹⁹ Seiji Kawasaki, professor in civics, interview Tokyo Gakugei University, 2015-05-11 & Kawasaki et al. 2010 *Chūkō shakaika e no apurōchi – Shakai kyōshi no senmonsei ikusei*, The Approach to Civic Studies in Middle and High School – Specialised Training for Civics Teachers. Tokyo Gakugei University Press. Tokyo, p. 33-35

Under these sub-categories, important focus points and words are listed, as well as a general explanation of what the teacher needs to convey to the students. The important parts are only explained in general terms, which gives the teacher a big part in interpreting the text. More of this particular section will be discussed below. The curriculum is currently not available in any other language than Japanese.

The Japanese curriculum has changed eight times since the Second World War. The latest change took place in 2009, when it replaced the 1999 curriculum (which in turn, was almost identical to the 1989 version). The older curriculum wanted what MEXT called “to conclude post-war education”²⁰ and such, it focused more on the introduction of information technology²¹ and the emerging concept of globalisation²². The sentence 「社会の変化が激しさを増会した時期であつた。」 (“*Shakai no henka ga hageshisa o zōkaishita jiki deatta*”, It was a time when societal changes were increasing violence.) reflects that the changes must have been quite stark, since the need to teach students how the society deals with these changes²³ shows in the past curriculum.²⁴ Due to the size of the study, only this brief comparison of the new curriculum to the 1999 curriculum was made.

The second piece of research material consists of two previously conducted semi-structured interviews, processed through various forms of qualitative analysis. The interviewees were with Seiji Kawasaki and Takahiro Ueno. Kawasaki is a professor at Tokyo Gakugei University, where he is researching multicultural education and civics education. He also co-wrote a book on the topic of comparison of the Japanese curriculums. Ueno wrote a masters' thesis on nationalism in Japan and works as a civics teacher at a Gakugei-affiliated elementary school. It was also from these interviews, that the key words of the study were deterred. The key words are words that are important words and sentences in the curriculum that specifically foster and add to citizenship construction. The methodology was then based on on these key words. More on that in the following chapter.

In this form of interview based material the researcher's pre-understanding (the researcher's own thoughts, feelings and experience) is of great importance.²⁵ In this case, the language barrier acts like a filter, since the interviewees, according to Levi McLaughlin, probably can reproduce the most genuine answer in their own native language.²⁶ Therefore, the interviews were conducted in both English and Japanese, jointly. The amount of interviews is small, but closely related to the research questions of this study.²⁷ The interview questions were related to how the newest curriculum differs from the previous one, if there is more patriotic content added to the new curriculum, what kind of citizen the curriculum wants to create, etc.

²⁰ 戦後教育の総決算, *sengo kyōiku no sōkessan* (my translation)

²¹ [...]コンピュータ技術の発展に伴って情報化社会が到来し [...], *konpyūta gijutsu no hatten nitomonatte jōhōkashakai ga tōrai shi* (my translation)

²²国際化に対応する社会科, *kokusaika ni taiō suru shakaika* (my translation)

²³社会の変化に対応する社会科, *shakai no henka ni taiō suru shakaika* (my translation)

²⁴ Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 32

²⁵ Stukát, Staffan. 2011. *Att skriva examensarbete inom utbildningsvetenskap*. Studentlitteratur AB. Lund, p. 36

²⁶ McLaughlin “All Research is Fieldwork: A Practical Introduction to Studying in Japan as a Foreign Researcher” in *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 30-1-10, July 26, 2010

²⁷ Esaiasson, Peter et al. 2007. *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. Upplaga 3. Norstedts juridik. Stockholm, p. 180-183, p. 189-190

During the interviews with Kawasaki, he said that the 2009 curriculum differs, at large, from its predecessor on the following points. This list of important changes acts as the base for the analysis:

- More importance on fostering abilities of criticism, statement and discussion
- More importance on history education (especially on Japanese history in the area of World History and on studying cultures)
- More importance on religion
- More importance on moral education (道徳教育, *dōtokukyōiku*) in all aspects of school education - as such, the 倫理 (morals) section has been expanded
- More importance on studying "raison d'être" (在り方生き方, *arikata ikikata*) & how to live as human beings in "Contemporary Society" (Civics)
- More importance on studying "Happiness (幸福, *kōfuku*), Justice (正義, *seigi*) and Equity (公正, *kōsei*)" was added for students to investigate & understand societies in "Contemporary Society" (Civics)
- The concept of ゆとり教育 (*yutori kyōiku*, relaxed education, i.e. less tests and more free education structure) has been abolished²⁸

The increased focus on 道徳教育 (*dōtokukyōiku*) has spawned the word 在り方生き方 (*arikata ikikata*).²⁹ When defining 在り方生き方, the word can be split up into 在り方, (way of being) and 生き方 (way of living). When used together, it more closely translates into the French word "raison d'être". Other sentences that appear stronger in the latest curriculum are 「生命に対する畏敬の念」 (*seimei ni taisuru ikei no nen*, respect and reverence for life) and 「他者と共に」 (*tasha to tomo ni*, coexistence with others). 伝統や文化 (*dentō ya bunka*, (Japanese) tradition and culture) is also now a prioritised subject within social sciences.³⁰

Interestingly, the phenomenon of 「ゆとり教育」 (*yutori kyōiku*, relaxed education) has been abolished from the curriculum.³¹ The concept was introduced as a revision to the curriculum guidelines of 1977, to reduce extensive examinations. Further, subject content as "No Child Left Behind" measured the number of teaching hours, and extra-curricular activities, to reduce the burden of students.³²

The third piece of source material is an interesting publication; one which middle school sections are closely linked to this study – the moral education study pamphlet material 「心のノート」 (*Kokoro no nōto*, Notebook of the Heart). This pamphlet was distributed to every elementary and middle school in Japan in 2002. According to MEXT, 心のノート is meant as "[...] a study material in which desirable morality for children is clearly and understandably described and explained."³³

²⁸ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-18 & Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 33-35

²⁹ Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 33

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 33

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 33-34

³² Toda, Hiroshi. "Yutori kyōiku" *minaoshi to gakushū shidō yōryō no arikata*, Review of "Relaxed Education" and the Nature of the Curriculum Guidelines in *Rippō to chōsa*, Legislation and Investigation 2009.8 No.295, p. 66-68

³³ Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Japanese Government Policies in Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. 2002. *Chapter 3 For the Cultivation of "Richness in Mind" Section 3 Efforts Aimed at Nurturing "Richness in Mind"*, section 2a

Furthermore, “[...] it is expected that children broaden the understanding of morality and become aware of their own development in morality by actively participating in the morality classes.”³⁴ The pamphlets consist of what can be categorised into four parts;

- (i) "mainly something concerning oneself" To acquire desirable life-style, to have strong will to complete tasks, to have enough sense to tell right from wrong, to love truth, to improve oneself, etc.
- (ii) "mainly something concerning others" To be polite, to care for others, to encourage each other, to respect the personality and standpoint of others, etc.
- (iii) "mainly something concerning nature and piety" To cherish and protect nature, to be moved by something beautiful, to have a sense of piety for something beyond the power of human beings, to respect the life of both oneself and others, etc.
- (iv) "mainly something concerning collective values and society" To be aware of the roles and responsibilities attached to a member of society, to improve the collective welfare of society, to respect law and order, to be fair and just, to understand the importance of labor[sic], to cherish homeland and soil, to work for the development of the homeland, to contribute to world peace and the happiness of mankind, etc.³⁵

The very title, Notebook of the Heart, begs the question of what meaning the “heart” has. Is it the actual heart, the soul or something else? Regarding what the pamphlet treats, one can assume that it aims for the soul, or rather the spirit of being a good Japanese citizen.

4. Theory and methodology

Regarding the text analysis, there are a number of different sub-categories, but clarifying the structures of thought within the Japanese curriculum, as well as investigating the discourses with focus on words and passages, will be the main goal.³⁶ The research questions consist of how the Japanese citizen is constructed, and what language and words are important – therefore the text analysis is the important methodology here.

This study will utilise Fairclough’s theories on discourse and text analysis. In these, he highlights the fact that language is a part of social practice and is chained to the “agents”, and their context and background, who are using it. This is especially important to understand when analysing political texts (as curriculums are in one way, since topics and foci in curriculums are chosen (in)directly by politicians).³⁷ Fairclough makes an example of left-wing discourse, where phenomenon such as “capitalist globalisation” and “the global economy” have commonly accepted connotations within their group. Also relations between words are shown in a new light when dissecting who uses them, i.e. what the intertextual relation between the words “companies” and “capital” has, depending on who uses the words.³⁸

³⁴ MEXT, 2002, section 2a

³⁵ *ibid.*, section 1c

³⁶ Esaiasson et al., 2007, p. 238-240

³⁷ Fairclough, Norman. 2003. *Analysing Discourse – Textual analysis for social research*. Routledge. New York, p.35

³⁸ *ibid.*, p.136

Speaking of intertextuality, it is equally important to understand what was left out of a context as to see what was included in it. By choosing to exclude something, one can also influence what is transferred to the second party.³⁹

Furthermore, political and curricular texts can also be seen as a struggle for hegemony, such as to impose feelings and to urge to specific actions. By choosing and placing words and sentences in different ways, meanings, assertions and assumptions of said words and sentences change.⁴⁰ Fairclough makes it clear that all forms of community rest and depend upon meanings that can be taken as given, something he calls “common ground”. Upon achieving hegemony, one can change this common ground more easily, and as such, change assumptions on what is required to be done by a citizen.⁴¹

For procedural matters, it should be pointed out that the first step of the analysis was to begin with the the list of important key words from the curriculum. As stated earlier, the base for this study was the list of curricular changes received from Kawasaki. Further on, during the interviews with Kawasaki and Ueno, more interesting key words were discovered, further broadening the base of analysis. From the results of these interviews, the search was expanded to other sentences and sections related to this study, i.e. sections on globalism, and Japanese values, to see if other key words of importance could be found there. This is motivated by the fact that these sections play an essential part in the curriculum's citizenship fostering descriptions, as they urge the students to harbour distinct feelings or act in a specific way.⁴² These sentences and passages of text were then extracted from the curriculum in their entirety. This was done to display the context in which the desired effects and aims of the text show.⁴³

Every translation in the analysis are my own. The translation process was made by a combination of language proficiency and Japanese dictionaries. The material was searched for the previously stated important key words. If the passages of text that the key words appeared in had a connection to the research questions, they were then translated and analysed.

5. Analysis

5.1 Introduction of the analysis

As indicated above, the analysis is based on the list of changes and important key words deducted from the interviews. The results from these, together with the expanded search in the curriculum have shown three distinct thematic groups; “morals and ethics”, “tradition vs. globalism” and “Japanese values and the Japanese way of life”. The first group discusses moral education and how citizens of Japan are supposed to interact with their fellow countrymen, and society on different levels, in order to live a “fulfilling life”.

³⁹ Fairclough, 2003, p.47

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.45-46

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p.55-56

⁴² *ibid.*, p.45-46

⁴³ *ibid.*, p.8

The second handles the clash of traditional culture and the globalised world, and how the Japanese citizen should relate to these two. The third group, focuses on the “typical way” of Japanese culture, and the importance of being aware of ones’ Japanese identity.

These thematic groups have the most predominantly citizenship creating elements in the text. Segments from the text containing the key words are translated and analysed for how the text constructs the citizens of Japan. It should be noted that the Japanese curriculum uses vague terms when describing the important foci. This leaves the teacher responsible for deciphering the text and applying its contents to the actual classroom education. There are sections called 「内容の取扱い」 (*naiyō no toriatsukai*, handling of the content), but they are also used with broader terms or with only a few examples, still leaving the teacher in charge of applying the content to actual teaching.

5.2 Morals and ethics

During the interviews it was revealed that, due to a right turn in politics in 2012, the Abe-led government the wanted extra focus on the 倫理 (morals) section, and so expanded it in an amendment to the curriculum the same year. This was made in preparation for the morals section to become a separate, new, subject in the 2019 curriculum.⁴⁴

Starting out with the words 幸福 (*kōfuku*), 正義 (*seigi*), 公正 (*kōsei*), which have been more emphasised in the 2009 curriculum, they are defined in the following paragraph:

上記の諸課題を考察するときの基盤として、「幸福、正義、公正」を理解しておきたい。これらは個別に取り上げるのではなく、個々人の願う充実した人生をできる限り実現（幸福）するためにそれぞれが対等な社会の構成員として適切な配慮を受けている（公正）かを確認しながらすべての人にとって望ましい解決策を考える（正義）というように、相互に関連させて扱うことが重要である。⁴⁵

To interpret the basis of the prior issues, we will want to understand the words happiness, justice and equity. Rather to pick up each word individually, we know that to achieve *happiness*, one must lead a fulfilling life, in which the individual receives appropriate and equal, *fair*, care from society, as well as taking all the desirable, *just*, actions towards this society and all humans in it. It is important that one understands the relation these words have to each other.

Here, the curriculum shows that happiness means to have a fulfilling life, justice is to receive equal treatment, that all citizens contribute equally to society, and that equality is that everybody receives the same treatment, whether it is by the law, the society or by other people. This passage of text is idealistic in its nature.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11 & Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 33-35

⁴⁵ Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). 2012. *Shin kyōiku katei: Kōmin*, New Curriculum: Civic Studies. Tokyo, p. 4

⁴⁶ Fairclough, 2003, p.8

The word “happiness” has a very general meaning here, since the (intertextual) meaning, and thus the relation the students are supposed to have to the word, is decided by the Ministry of Education (MEXT).⁴⁷

The key words 「生命に対する畏敬の念」 (*seimei ni taisuru ikei no nen*, respect and reverence for life), opens up the 倫理 (morals) section of the curriculum as seen in the following sentence:

人間尊重の精神と生命に対する畏敬の念に基づいて、青年期における自己形成と人間としての在り方生き方について理解と思索を深めさせるとともに、人格の形成に努める実践的意欲を高め、他者と共に生きる主体としての自己の確立を促し、良識ある公民として必要な能力と態度を育てる。⁴⁸

The spirit of human dignity, respect and reverence for life, along with deepened understanding and meditation on the way of life and adolescent self-forming, increases the practical willingness to strive for the formation of ones' personality. Living together with others encourage this personality self-establishment and foster the necessary abilities and attitudes to become a sensible citizen.

Here, a collectivistic approach to the formation of the individual shines through. The focus is on the coexistence with the group, and through it learning respect for life, as a necessity for the student to become a respectable citizen. This sort of text imposes a feeling, in this case that one cannot become a full adequate member of society if one does not live together with others. And so, the drive for continuing the current collectivistic hegemony is put into place.⁴⁹

Speaking of living together, other important key words, 「他者と共に」 (*tasha to tomo ni*, coexistence with others) are brought up in the curriculum. Regarding this, much focus is put upon the community level of society – such as your neighbours, co-workers and so on. This following passage is taken from the 現代社会 (*gendai shakai*, contemporary society) section and seems to place 「他者と共に」 in a context of juridical matters:

個人の尊重を基礎として、国民の権利の保障、法の支配と法や規範の意義及び役割、司法制度の在り方について日本国憲法と関連させながら理解を深めさせるとともに、生命の尊重、自由・権利と責任・義務、人間の尊厳と平等などについて考察させ、他者と共に生きる倫理について自覚を深めさせる。⁵⁰

Based on the respect for individuals and the security of citizen's rights, we discuss the significance and role of rule of law and norms as well as the judicial system associated with the Constitution of Japan. Sections of matter also include discussing respect for life and freedom, rights, responsibilities and obligations. Also to be noted, are topics such as equality and human dignity, to deepen awareness about the ethics of living with others.

⁴⁷ Fairclough, 2003, p.136

⁴⁸ MEXT, 2012, p. 9

⁴⁹ Fairclough, 2003, p.45-46

⁵⁰ MEXT, 2012, p. 5

Ethics, in this case, seem to be the rights and obligations of the citizens, respect for the law, and different opinions and cultures. A kind of "live, and let live" mentality can be seen here:

現代の民主政治について、基本的人権の保障と法の支配に関する内容を中心に扱う項目「個人の尊重」が法の基礎であり、だからこそ人々が協力しあって社会を形成していることを理解させる。私たちが生きる社会には法や道徳、宗教などの社会規範があることを理解し、個人と個人が尊重し合いながら生きていくという「他者とともに生きる倫理」について考察させる。また、司法制度の在り方を考える際に「裁判員制度」を取り上げることで、国民の司法参加の意義を理解させるとともに、公正な裁判を行うための工夫や刑罰の意義などについても、自らの問題として考えられるようにする。⁵¹

Regarding modern democratic politics, guarantees for the fundamental human rights are the "respect for the individual" and "the rule of law". This is how people are able to form a society, and we need to work together to understand this. We live in a society where law and morals exist, and we need to understand that there are social norms, i.e. religion, that the individual have to respect. This respect is crucial, so we need to discuss the "ethics to live with others." In addition, we will study the judicial system. To understand the "jury system", and the importance of judicial participation, we will study the significance of ingenuity and punishment, as well as how to carry out a fair trial, and what problems are connected to this.

This passage also focuses on the importance of fairness, maybe as an effect of the extra focus on justice (正義, *seigi*) and equity (公正, *kōsei*). Fairness and equity are, according to the curriculum text, absolute to achieve the basic human rights, and the citizens of Japan should therefore strive to achieve this. This segment is expressing the idealistic approach to moral education and one of the ideals that the citizens of Japan must strive for.⁵²

The curriculum text above, which is taken from the contemporary society section, seems to stress that understanding the rule of law and one's rights and obligations is important for coexisting with others. But the segment from the 倫理 (morals) section focuses on a different view:

現代に生きる自己の課題自らの体験や悩みを振り返ることを通して、青年期の意義と課題を理解させ、豊かな自己形成に向けて、他者と共に生きる自己の生き方について考えさせるとともに、自己の生き方が現代の倫理的課題と結び付いていることをとらえさせる。⁵³

By reviewing our own personal experiences and hardships in the modern society, we can understand the significance and challenges of adolescence. This is how we should think, and how we should discuss about how to aim for self-forming, and on how to live together with others, as well as the ethical problems tied to the modern way of living.

⁵¹ MEXT, 2012, p. 5

⁵² Fairclough, 2003, p.8

⁵³ MEXT, 2012, p. 9

This segment instead focuses on the challenges of modern society, connecting to the students' own experiences and on how to use them to grow into a person that can live together with others. Furthermore, the students are encouraged to actively participate in society in general. This is worded as an urge to the students.⁵⁴ As society is built upon the contribution of everyone, democracy also plays a role. This is of course shown in the curriculum, where students are encouraged to participate, not only in society in itself, but also in the democratic system that makes up society. To take heed of ethics, is also noted:

現代の民主政治と政治参加の意義基本的人権の保障, 国民主権, 平和主義と我が国の安全について理解を深めさせ天皇の地位と役割, 議会制民主主義と権力分立など日本国憲法に定める政治の在り方について国民生活とのかかわりから認識を深めさせるとともに, 民主政治における個人と国家について考察させ, 政治参加の重要性と民主社会において自ら生きる倫理について自覚を深めさせる。⁵⁵

The guarantee of fundamental human rights of the modern democratic politics and the importance of political participation. We will study the status and role of the emperor to deepen the understanding of our national sovereignty. Pacifism and Japan's safety, parliamentary democracy and the separation of powers, such as politics are stipulated in the Constitution of Japan. Along with the aforementioned points, we will focus to deepen the recognition of the the ideal relationship between people, discuss the role of the individual and the state of democratic politics. This will lead to a deepening awareness among the students about ethics, and how to live their own life. Also, this stresses the importance of political participation in a democratic society.

The phenomenon of 「ゆとり教育」 (*yutori kyōiku*, relaxed education, i.e. less tests and more free education structure) has been abolished in the curriculum. According to Kawasaki, this was also because of the right turn of politics in 2012.⁵⁶ When asked what the reason for this was, he answered that the government wants to improve academic results. The previous relaxed attitude was thought to not foster enough hard workers.⁵⁷ Omission of this whole phenomenon sends a clear signal that Japanese society does not rest upon relaxation.⁵⁸

5.3 Tradition vs. globalism

The studying of 伝統や文化 (*dentō ya bunka*, traditions and culture) has been emphasized, in a way it had not been in 1989/1999. This was, according to Kawasaki, due to the new nationalistic policies by Abe, starting in 2012. And so, this section has been expanded, as well as the sections on traditions and domestic culture.⁵⁹ This stands in contrast with the more globalised approach in the curriculum, continued shortly. Understanding traditions and culture seems to have a central point in the transition to adulthood and understanding society itself, according to the curriculum:

⁵⁴ Fairclough, 2003, p.45-46

⁵⁵ MEXT, 2012, p. 5

⁵⁶ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11 & Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 33-35

⁵⁷ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11

⁵⁸ Fairclough, 2003, p.47

⁵⁹ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11 & Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 33-35

青年期と自己の形成生涯における青年期の意義を理解させ、自己実現と職業生活、社会参加、伝統や文化に触れながら自己形成の課題を考察させ、現代社会における青年の生き方について自覚を深めさせる。⁶⁰

To understand the significance of adolescence, we will discuss the lifetime formation of one self, self-realization and professional life, social participation. Furthermore, we will discuss the challenges of self-formation while touching on the tradition and culture. Also, we will deepen the awareness about the way of life of youth in modern society.

The curriculum articulates tradition as the foundation for the building of character, regardless of gender and occupation:

青年期の意義を理解し、自らの内面に向き合い、社会とのかかわりの中で、生き方を考察させる項目青年期は、自己を確立する基礎を培う重要な時期である。伝統や文化の上に成り立つ社会で、性別や職業の違いを問わず、個性を發揮しながらよりよく生きることの重要性を理解させる。また、自分の生き方の考察については、現代社会の特質を踏まえた上で、生涯にわたり学習していくことが重要である。⁶¹

We will strive to understand the significance of adolescence and how to face ones' inner workings. Regarding life in society, the adolescence is a critical time to form the foundation to establish oneself, as well as to consider ones' way of life. In a society that holds tradition and culture highly, it is important to understand the essence of leading a good life, regardless of gender and occupation, rather than demonstrating ones' individuality. In addition, for a good discussion of ones' way of life in the modern society, it is important to continue to learn during ones' lifetime.

The importance of traditions and culture are stressed. To lead a good life, one must understand these parts. According to the text, it is shown that a good life based on culture and tradition is more important than showing individuality. Here, another collectivistic way of thinking shows in the curriculum. Adolescence is seen as the time for the student to become the citizen that understand this. This can be seen as a demand by MEXT, rather than a request, since it clearly states that culture and tradition is more important.⁶²

Since the 1989 curriculum, a major shift towards making Japanese students more globalised has occurred, a concept not really thought of prior to that. The 2009 curriculum continues that trend, despite the seemingly conflicting stronger focus on domestic culture. Ueno had an answer to this contradiction. The reason for this new globalism-oriented thinking, according to him, is economical. The Japanese people need to take part in the global market, but MEXT wants to make sure that the citizens are aware of their own culture when acting on a global level.⁶³

⁶⁰ MEXT, 2012, p. 4

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 4-5

⁶² Fairclough, 2003, p.108-109

⁶³ Takahiro Ueno, elementary school civics teacher, interview Tokyo Gakugei University affiliated elementary school, 2015-06-30

Another key word discovered in the new civics curriculum was 言語活動 (*gengokatsudō*, language activity). This means, according to Kawasaki, that Japanese students are required to be more active in the classroom in expressing their opinions or way of thinking. Kawasaki was asked to explain what the goal of this was and the answer was that students in Japan usually have low scores in class participation.⁶⁴

After asking Kawasaki why he thought this extra focus on active participation was added, he said that it's probably "[b]ecause we live in a globalised world now, and we want our Japanese students to be able to express themselves about our Japanese culture and society towards people from other cultures. But also because we want Japanese people to be more active in the global market."⁶⁵ Ueno agrees with this statement, saying it is the primary reason for this added focus. But also, because Japanese citizens tend to be bad at being active speakers of their mind, they cannot use the knowledge learned in school in the global market.⁶⁶

If one studies the Japanese curriculum, it can be seen that MEXT has also used the expanded Japanese presence on the global level as a way to spread Japanese values abroad. As a continuation of this, the Japanese citizen should continue the spread of these values. This can be seen in the globalism part of the civics curriculum:

国際社会の政治、経済の動向や課題を取り上げ、日本の果たすべき役割や日本人の生き方について考察させる項目。グローバル化が進む国際社会では、生活が便利になった一方で、領土問題、人種、民族問題、核兵器と軍縮問題、南北問題など様々な課題が生まれている。もはや一国だけで解決することは難しく、国際社会の中での日本としてひいては人類として何ができるかを考察させる。⁶⁷

By adopting the politic and economic trends and challenges of the international community, we should discuss what role Japan should play in this community, and how it affects the Japanese way of life. In this more and more globalised international community, even though life has become more convenient, new problems have arisen: territorial issues, controversy regarding race and ethnicity, nuclear weapons and disarmament issues, the North-South problem and so on. As problems are becoming more difficult for single countries to solve, we must ask ourselves what Japan can do in the community, as well as what we can do as humans.

This can be interpreted as a political call to action, that the citizens of Japan spread the values abroad while dealing with various challenges.⁶⁸ MEXT acknowledges that there are a lot of problems in the world, that cannot be solved internally, and thus have to be solved on the global scale. The curriculum specifies some of these problems as being defence of democracy, pacifism and the disarmament of nuclear weapons, where Japan and its citizens must take the lead:

⁶⁴ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Takahiro Ueno, interview, 2015-06-30

⁶⁷ MEXT, 2012, p. 6

⁶⁸ Fairclough, 2003, p.35

核兵器と軍縮問題では、日本が唯の被爆国であることを踏まえ世界の安全保障の在り方について様々な観点から考えさせる「我が国の安全保障と防衛及び国際貢献」では、「イ 現代の民主政治と政治参加の意義」の「平和主義我が国の安全」と関連させ1 広い視野から考えさせる。⁶⁹

Regarding the nuclear weapons and disarmament issues, considering the fact that Japan is the only country where the atomic bomb has been used, Japan has various points of view about the world security, as well as the safety of "Pacifist Japan" itself. Different sections that will be covered include "Japan's security and defence and international contribution" and "the significance of modern democracy and political participation".

In this segment, an explicit thought is presented; the one about Japan's place in striving towards world peace and security. What is left implicit, is through what measures this is achieved.⁷⁰ The thought of increased Japanese presence in the world stage is further strengthened by this sentence:

「国際平和と人類の福祉」については、今日私たちが抱える問題が、一地域や一国内にとどまらないことを理解すること。自分たちにできることについて考えさせ、これに貢献する意欲を高め、積極的に参加する態度を養う。⁷¹

When speaking about the "welfare of international peace and humanity" and the problems that we face today, we need to understand that they do not stay within one region or one country. Rather than that, they often are much bigger. To think about this fact, will hopefully increase the willingness to contribute to the international welfare, and cultivate the attitude to participate actively in society.

Here, students are encouraged to take part in international matters, as the text explains to them that one country cannot survive on its own in today's internationalised world. It is a very explicit request that can be seen here. As such, it is urging the students to take action, with no hidden intertextuality.⁷² Speaking of participation on the international stage, the curriculum wants Japanese citizens to spread the Japanese values, and use them to help as a course towards world peace:

国際平和と人類の福祉：世界の中の日本人としての在り方生き方については、ユネスコ憲章や平和を求めた先哲の著作を利用することも考えられる。⁷³

International peace and human welfare: to life as the Japanese in the world is to live by the Japanese way, as well as taking the works required of the UNESCO charter and peace seriously.

This sentence also includes that the Japanese citizen should take heed of international agreements, as well as keeping the Japanese way of life. These implicit values can, in this case, be thought of a motive for action, in this case; to keep the Japanese values alive, and use them abroad to further peace.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ MEXT, 2012, p. 6

⁷⁰ Fairclough, 2003, p.17

⁷¹ MEXT, 2012, p. 11

⁷² Fairclough, 2003, p.45-46

⁷³ MEXT, 2012, p. 11

⁷⁴ Fairclough, 2003, p.112

5.4 Japanese values and the Japanese way of life

The part that Kawasaki stressed the most regarding the newest version of the curriculum, was the word 在り方生き方 (*arikata ikikata*, *raison d'être*). This key word seems to be a new essential part in citizen creation. This is connected to the stronger focus on moral education in the Japanese curriculum.⁷⁵ What does the Japanese curriculum say about 在り方生き方? This phenomenon seems to be closely linked to passages on how to preserve the Japanese way of life, and to protect values and traditions of the country, but also that hard work is preferable.

現代と倫理現代に生きる人間の倫理的課題について思索を深めさせ、自己の生き方の確立を促すとともに、よりよい国家・社会を形成し、国際社会に主体的に貢献しようとする人間としての在り方生き方について自覚を深めさせる。⁷⁶

Deepening the discussion about the ethical problems that modern society humans face, encourages one to form a better nation and society, as well as deepens the awareness of the ideal life as a human trying to proactively contribute to international community.

This passage urges the students to become citizens that proactively work and contribute to form a better nation and society, both domestic and international. The measures are not explained, and is left to the teacher to apply to the teaching.⁷⁷ It also acknowledges that citizens of Japan should be part of the international community. Speaking of increased Japanese presence on the global scene, as the curriculum continues on, other messages can be found related to this matter. Under the sub-category 「国際社会に生きる日本人としての自覚」 (*kokusai shakai ni ikiru nihonjin toshite no jikaku*, self-awareness as Japanese living in a global society), one can read the following:

日本人にみられる人間観、自然観、宗教観などの特質について、我が国の風土や伝統、外来思想の受容に触れながら、自己とのかかわりにおいて理解させ、国際社会に生きる主体性のある日本人としての在り方生き方について自覚を深めさせる。⁷⁸

The Japanese view of humans and nature, as well as religious matters. While touching the subject of foreign idea acceptance, we should know that we are a country of culture and traditions. We need to understand things related to one self, as well as the independence to live in the international community. Focus on deepening awareness about the way of life as a Japanese.

Here we can clearly see a strong focus point of the curriculum, to make Japanese citizens well aware of themselves, and that their country and society rests upon culture and traditions. The “common ground” of the Japanese society is established here.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ MEXT, 2012, p.2

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 10

⁷⁷ Fairclough, 2003, p.45-47

⁷⁸ MEXT, 2012, p. 10

⁷⁹ Fairclough, 2003, p.55-56

日本の風土ではぐくまれた日本人のものの見方や考え方を失うことなく、外来思想を受け入れてきたことに留意する。⁸⁰

Without losing the traditional Japanese way of seeing things, and way of thinking the Japanese people have been nurtured into, we will study/note foreign ideas.

This sentence clearly shows that the aim of MEXT is to keep Japan “Japanese”. It is of course accepted to note and study foreign ideas, but it is clearly stated that the Japanese way of thinking and seeing things are not to be lost or changed by these foreign ideas. In this particular sentence, the “traditional Japanese way” is not explained. This can be interpreted as a case of intertextuality, as this fundamental part is excluded.⁸¹ By excluding this explanation, it is up to the teacher to decide what to include. This points towards the fact that the teachers must assume based on the present cultural hegemony.⁸²

One specific page of 「心のノート」 (*Kokoro no nōto*, Notebook of the Heart) is also related to the awareness of their country. It is headed by a sentence that especially captures this feeling:

我が国を愛し。その発展を願う。⁸³

Love our country. Wish for its advancement.

This is indeed an indication to the students to love and cherish their country. Taking into accord that the text is taken from a government sponsored source, it clearly shows the aim of how the citizen should feel about his/her country.⁸⁴ The rest of the text depicts the beautiful things of Japan, like the seasons, colours and sounds. Depicting a commonly perceived image of Japan, the text uses the “common ground” to evoke feelings of pride.⁸⁵

Continuing the theme of Japanese ideals, the following sentences in the curriculum deal with how these ideals interact with the outside world:

日本の伝統思想が仏教や儒教などの外来思想を受容することによってどのように変化したか、また何が変化しなかったかについて目を向けさせる。⁸⁶

How did the Japanese traditional thinking change because of foreign Buddhism and Confucianism? What can we see that *has not* changed?

Here the Japanese students learn how their culture has changed due to foreign influence, and what parts “survived” through said influence. This theme is continued in the sentence below:

⁸⁰ MEXT, 2012, p. 10

⁸¹ Fairclough, 2003, p.47

⁸² *ibid.*, p.55-56

⁸³ Monbu Kagakushou. 2002. *Kokoro no nōto: Chūgakkō*, Notebook of the Heart: Middle School. Akatsuki Kyōiku Tosho. Tokyo, p. 117 (section 6, p. 17)

⁸⁴ Fairclough, 2003, p.35

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.55-56

⁸⁶ MEXT, 2012, p. 10

外来思想をどのように受容してきたかという見方をするだけでなく、それらがどのようにして今日の私たちの考え方を形成してきたかを理解させる。⁸⁷

Not only understand how we have received these foreign ideas, but also to understand how they form our perception of today.

As implied from this, the students need to understand what part of their perception of reality, and what ideas that form this perception, that is foreign influenced. This is put in contrast to what is “typically” Japanese ideals and ideas. This sentence of study could be because a comparative analysis can broaden understanding of both sides of reality perception. The curriculum wants the Japanese citizens to be aware of what Japanese ideals and values are, by comparing them to foreign ones.

The reason for stronger focus on domestic culture and values is for the Japanese to learn more about the diversity of Japanese people, according to Kawasaki.⁸⁸ Ueno noted that without this added focus on customs and traditions, Japanese society would fall apart or, at the least, make an unwanted change.⁸⁹ Also, he notes, “my grandfather, born in Meiji 38 (1905) told me to always bow your head to become a good citizen, but now I think it is not that strict. At least you should have 義理人情 (*girininjō*, a sense of moral obligation and humane feelings), but recently this has disappeared more and more because of more focus on the individual – therefore we need to restore it with more focus on moral education.”⁹⁰

Furthermore, during the interview with Ueno, he said that he wants Japan to become a more accepting of immigrants to combat declining birth rates, and therefore change the way Japanese citizens view foreign cultures.⁹¹ His opinion is reflected in the following sentence:

「地域社会」については、家族構成や家族規模の変化、労働形態の変1情化、身近に暮らし働く外国の人々との共生、福祉や社会保障の在り方などが、地域社会の問題と密接に結び付いていることに気付かせる。⁹²

Regarding the "community", it must be reminded how close to the local community issues like family structure and family size changes, the change of labour form, close symbiosis with foreign people living and working and welfare and social security are.

This is of course contrasted (maybe even contradictory) to the preceding part, where MEXT expresses its will to keep Japan's innate values from foreign ideas, even if this is phrased more as a request, rather than an explicit order.⁹³ This sentence also stresses the importance of locality. As most of the work for a better life is supposed to be placed on the individual, a lot of responsibilities are put upon him or her. Acceptance of, and even symbiosis with, foreigners is thought to be an important part of the local community.

⁸⁷ MEXT, 2012, p. 10

⁸⁸ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11

⁸⁹ Takahiro Ueno, interview, 2015-06-30

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² MEXT, 2012, p. 11

⁹³ Fairclough, 2003, p.45-46, 109-110

When ultimately asked what citizen Japan wants to create, Ueno answers that “[i]t is difficult to say what a good citizen is – there is no definition in the curriculum. But I think the government wants the Japanese citizens to take pride in Japanese culture, to be *majime* (*majime*, earnest/diligent) to “perfect its society”, to not lose the sense of being Japanese (「日本人らしさをなくさない」, *nihonjinrashisa o nakusanai*) and to continue to obey the government.” Interestingly, a few minutes later he added that he thinks that the government wants more democratic citizens.⁹⁴

6. Discussion

The most important discovery is, as mentioned in the beginning of the analysis chapter, that the Japanese curriculum leaves the teacher responsible for interpreting the text of the curriculum. Thus he/she becomes subject to the intertextual meaning of the contents, as established by (political) hegemony.⁹⁵ It can also be argued that by not explicitly telling teachers what to do with the contents, the teachers themselves can influence what to transfer to the students.⁹⁶ As stated earlier, there are sections called 「内容の取扱い」 (handling of the content) in the curriculum, but the terms are broad and use only a few examples, leaving the teacher in charge of applying the content to his/her actual teaching.

Learning this, evidence in the curriculum, suggesting that the Japanese Ministry of Education wants to create more hardline patriotic citizens, was few. Undoubtedly, the focus on moral education and teaching of traditional Japanese values show that this is a very conservative curriculum; however, rather than hardliners, it is supposedly creating more cultural awareness amongst Japanese students. This is to combat the fact that modern society changes behaviours in the younger generations, hence the increased focus on *在り方生き方* (*arikata ikikata*) as moral studies. This conclusion is of course made from what could be seen in the context of the curriculum. One could argue that there are some hidden messages in the curriculum, such notes are hinted at in the interviews previously made, but the material is too small to make formal conclusions of this.

When talking about standardised teaching and the assumed Western view on Japan as a country with a lack of seeing individuals within the group, Ueno contradicted this and said there has been a shift in Japan towards a more individual-admitting approach within this group oriented society. This can also explain the added focus on *在り方生き方* (*arikata ikikata*); as the society takes for granted or encourages more diverse opinions, it must focus on manners to keep the society from splitting apart.

One interpretation of this could be that the Japanese government is very focused on protecting the Japanese culture. The problem is that Japan needs to expand and take more shares of the global market, and thus is forced to send their employees abroad. While abroad, foreign cultures influence people.

⁹⁴ Takahiro Ueno, interview, 2015-06-30

⁹⁵ Fairclough, 2003, p.45-46, 55-56

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, p.47

As the Japanese government wants to protect the Japanese way of life, they need its citizens to be more educated about traditional values as a “shield” of sorts to protect them against being too influenced by the foreign culture, thus protecting the Japanese society from changing. This “shield” rests upon the common ground of morals, that hegemony in the society has created.⁹⁷

Regarding the apparent desire to keep Japanese citizens “Japanese”, in terms of culture and way of life, safe from foreign ideas, Turner could argue that this will become more and more difficult. The main argument would be that the very nature of globalisation and its macro structures lead to a new type of strain put on individuals. As such, the traditional meaning of exclusive citizenship has come under pressure, as the borders of countries, cultures and ways of living loosen up.⁹⁸

A thought that struck while reading the curriculum was related to the sentence:

「国際平和と人類の福祉」については、今日私たちが抱える問題が、一地域や一国内にとどまらないことを理解すること。自分たちにできることについて考えさせ、これに貢献する意欲を高め、積極的に参加する態度を養う。⁹⁹

Regarding the "international peace and welfare of humanity", for the problems that we face today, we need to understand that they do not stay within one region or one country, rather, they often are much bigger. To think about this fact, will hopefully increase the willingness to contribute to the international welfare, and cultivate the attitude to participate actively in society.

The doctrine of increased presence on the world stage as to protect world peace, could be aligned with Prime Minister Abe's defence bill revision of Japan's constitution's article 9 in 2015.¹⁰⁰ The segments on how the strive for world peace should be conducted are often left implicit, which may broaden the the measures.¹⁰¹ To act with military power overseas might be seen in the eyes of pro-revisionist politicians as a way for Japan to use its values to keep the peace.

One interesting side note, related to the revision of article 9 and the desire of spreading Japanese values abroad, is the previously stated example sentence 「我が国を愛し。その発展を願う。」 (Love our country. Wish for its advancement/enlargement.) from 「心のノート」 (*Kokoro no nōto*, Notebook of the Heart).¹⁰² The kanji of the word 発展 (*hatten*) can be interpreted as both “advancement” (of society), but also as “enlargement”. Taking heed of the “agent” that wrote (or commissioned) the book, one can interpret it as being in favour of revision and spread of cultural values.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Fairclough, 2003, p.45-46, 55-56

⁹⁸ Turner, 1993, p.2

⁹⁹ MEXT, 2012, p. 11

¹⁰⁰ The Japan Times, 22-07-15

¹⁰¹ Fairclough, 2003, p.17

¹⁰² Monbu Kagakushou, 2002, p. 117 (section 6, p. 17)

¹⁰³ Fairclough, 2003, p.35

伝統や文化 (*dentō ya bunka*, traditions and culture) has, interestingly enough, not a definition either. Maybe that isn't so strange, since "tradition" could be very subjective. These explaining segments have also maybe been left out of the curriculum text to make sure that the teachers themselves choose what to convey as traditional culture.¹⁰⁴

Kawasaki's statement, regarding that Japanese people need to be able to express themselves and convey Japanese culture to people from other cultures, is presumably related to the mission of the Ministry of Education. This mission is for the Japanese citizens to spread Japanese culture and values to the world. The Japanese students are trained to take pride in their culture and society, and it lies in line with the "soft power" approach that the Japanese government adopted in the 90's, after realizing that a more hard-line economic power approach was impossible after the burst of the bubble economy.¹⁰⁵ This attempt to renew the pride in all things Japanese comes very handy with the upcoming 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, where the eyes of the world will be focused on Japan.

During the interviews, both Kawasaki and Ueno said that the motives for the changes of the curriculum is to make the Japanese citizens obey the government more, or to stay away from politics. Interestingly, Ueno adds that he thinks the government still wants its citizens to be more democratic! This seem to contradict the motive of keeping the citizens away from politics by making them more obedient.

ゆとり教育 (relaxed education) was abolished in the latest curriculum. As Kawasaki stated, that the previous relaxed attitude was thought to not foster enough hard workers.¹⁰⁶ By taking on a stricter approach to education, students are prepared for a life of hard work. In order to help out the struggling Japanese economy, everyone's efforts are thought to matter.¹⁰⁷ This collectivistic reasoning is transcendent in various sections of the curriculum. Other reasons for abolishment were problems pointed out by its critics, namely the lowering of academic achievement - PISA results for Japan had been declining rapidly during the 90's and early 2000's.¹⁰⁸

In the curriculum, a collectivistic approach to the formation of the individual could be seen.¹⁰⁹ The way to become a sensible citizen seems to lie in the ability on how to interact with others. If one needs to interact with others for support, one needs not to stand out too much, for it can hinder the citizen's shaping.

When reading the traditional values and culture sections in the curriculum, one can get the feeling that the government wants the citizens of Japan to explicitly be built upon the legacy of their forefathers, as to continue the national story of their country.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Fairclough, 2003, p.47

¹⁰⁵ McGray, Douglas. "Japan's Gross National Cool" in *Foreign Policy* 2002-05-01.

¹⁰⁶ Seiji Kawasaki, interview, 2015-05-11

¹⁰⁷ Fairclough, 2003, p.47

¹⁰⁸ Kawasaki et al. 2010, p. 68-69

¹⁰⁹ MEXT, 2012, p. 9

¹¹⁰ Miller, 1996, p.413-414

Ueno also mentioned 義理人情 (*girininjō*, a sense of moral obligation and humane feelings)¹¹¹, the moral obligation being to work hard and protect the Japanese way.

So what can the Japanese citizen actually do for their country, as to answer John F. Kennedy's quote? To conclude, it is fair to say that making conclusions on this matter is hard to make from this study. Assuming from the curriculum alone, the answer essentially points towards "work hard to save the economy, while proudly protecting the national culture and its innate values, as it is in itself a patriotic reason to fight for." But keep in mind that it has become clear that decrypting messages only from text gives half the truth about citizen creation in the classrooms. As such, to get a more accurate description of how the "good Japanese citizen" is created, classroom observations are needed to see how the contents of the curriculum are used in practice by teachers.

¹¹¹ Takahiro Ueno, interview, 2015-06-30

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Interviews

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- Takahiro Ueno, elementary school civics teacher, interview Tokyo Gakugei University affiliated elementary school, 2015-06-30