Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Community Development in a Japanese Case

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Abstract

The scope of lifelong learning in Japan covers school education and informal learning. Japan faces large social changes: severe child population decline could ease competition for entrance examination but students are pushed to win in the society; cyber communication changes the human relationships more invisible and atomized; the gap between urban and remote areas is widened; and local industry can hardly find its successors and local schools need to attract students because young people move away to city. This article overlooks what the Japanese society has missed today and identifies it is the social aspects of outcomes by lifelong learning. Recent trends and the framework of lifelong learning in Japan are introduced, and the concept of social capital is used for discussion. The case study shows benefits of learning opportunities, technology, and collaboration in a Japanese local city to build a sustainable society.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, Social capital, Technology

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Introduction

Competencies are one of the main foci in recent education, especially, on the relationships with others at the international level[2]. Many different types and levels of communication influence our life, and recent development of information technology, for example, makes us recognize the potential and risk of its impacts. Education or lifelong learning becomes more important than ever before.

The Japanese education has a long successful history as the base of a top-level economy in the world so that it is expected to play an important role to tackle with any problems in the society. Parents want their children to receive high quality education, and students go to have private lessons after school for their entrance examinations. The emphasis is given heavily to the academic knowledge in subjects, although The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) wants to promote lifelong learning for overarching learning through school lessons and globalized society.

At the same time, there are many social problems concerning the Japanese youth. The main problems could be that many feel isolated (United Nations Children's Fund, 2007) and lose the motivation toward the future with hope (Kariya, 2001). Higher education is influenced by the reform and demographic factor. Local community has few younger generation involved into community management, and local industry such as farmers facing the problem of successors because many young labor move to city. In addition to population decline, "new economy" impacts the Japanese society without exception (Drucker, 2002) and the political initiative promoted social reform from the business side. The governments, especially out of urban areas, need to improve the situation of employment, welfare, and education, while their tax income is decreasing.

In this article, what we miss in Japanese education today is conceived as a social aspect of educational effects through formal education and informal learning. Social capital is the concept to analyze it. A case study is examined as comprehensive learning outcomes which stem from the process of community development projects in a local city in Japan. The author discusses the accumulation of social capital, as results of lifelong learning, is the key for sustainable development.

Social Problems and Lifelong Learning in Japan

Loss of Social Relationship; Increase of Non-profit Organization

The loss of social connectedness has been frequently picked up in recent Japan. The Japanese Cabinet Office published the yearly White Paper on the National Lifestyle in June 2007. The main theme of the Paper was a comfortable way of life, founded on personal relationships. It points out the people's satisfaction with their lives may be negatively affected by the weakening relationships. It suggests two directions to rebuild the relationships among the public that: one is to remove the restrictions on maintaining relationships; the other is to devise ways for relationships in harmony with the current situation to be created within families, communities, and workplaces (Cabinet Office, 2007). According to the Labor

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[2] "Key Competencies" shown in OECD's DeSeCo, for example, prioritizes the communication to develop relationships besides academic performance.

Ministry in 2005, "freeters"[3] are more than 2 million and NEET[4] are more than 600,000. The new social layers are recently born, called "working poor" who have a job but earn small amount for their living and "net-cafe refugees" who do not have own home address and stay in internet cafe at night[5]. The number of "refugees" is estimated 5,300 in urban areas mainly (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2007). The home address is important to register for stable job so that they can hardly find a well-paid job without the address and fall into the vicious cycle of wasting lives. Several media broadcast their severe living conditions. The private companies in high competition also use and regard the young workers dispensable. At the same time, many adults press publicly the youth should make more efforts to improve their lives for themselves[6].

As surroundings for children and youth, there are problems such as crimes targeted children, crimes committed by the youth, their suicide, and bullying in and out of schools. Additionally, there appear newer and invisible social issues of children's isolation because of the rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) which changes the quality of their human relationships. For example, girls find one-time intimate adult "friend," coordinated in cyberspace, and try to receive money from them for their inappropriate relation. The number of "under-the-school web site" is skyrocketing, and students make a lot of cyber communication by their mobile phone to decide and attack target student(s) in class. Teachers and parents cannot access their communication. When the youth are too depending on the cyber communication, they are unable to move out to the real world for building direct human relationships. "Anonymity and fluidity in the virtual world encourage 'easy in, easy out,' 'drive-by' relationships. That very casualness is the appeal of computer-mediated communication for some denizens of cyberspace, but it discourages the creation of social capital. If entry and exit are too easy, commitment, trustworthiness, and reciprocity will not develop (Putman, 2000, p.177)."

On the other hand, more individuals and groups have started activities to solve the social problems. It was shown in 2004 that the urban area had lower social capital, indexed as communication, trust, and civil participation, by the Cabinet Office. The number of non-

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[3] Those who do not have permanent job but especially the young workers serve as part-timers. They often change their jobs around for several reasons and it seems to be "free" to the salaried labors who patiently work today's conditions. But once the young workers "drop" out from permanent labor path into "freeter" position, the companies hire them as cheap labor and the young workers have to waste their lives without a certain future.

[4] Its definition is manifold among the Ministries and governmental organizations but commonly denoted those who are not in employment nor in education and training.

[5] The cost of the internet cafe is between 100 and 200 yens an hour: if he/she stays a day, it costs 2400 to 4800 yens. The cheapest apartment in urban areas costs around 30,000 to 50,000 so that the cafe costs more. But users want to save transportation costs because the net-cafe is available in very downtown. The net-cafe offers a small booth of 100 by 200 cm, equipped with sofa, desk, reading light, TV set, a computer with internet access, free 24-hour shared bathroom and shower, books and comics, and etc. The users always have to hold their mobile phone to receive an order from the companies after they register at the company's web site. Their income is about 10,000 yen a day: if they work five days a week, 200,000 yens a month come to their pocket. But it is not always and with no insurance and guarantees. (Nihon TV (2007, March 7) from "News ZERO")

[6] Making a personal effort is highly valuable in the Japanese culture because it propped up the basic economic growth through the companies. The elder people expect the younger to press down personal wishes but to obtain the ability and develop personal inner enrichment by being patient.

profit/non-government organizations (NPO/NGO[7]) is increasing due to recent legislation, especially, more NPOs are built in urban areas (Nishide & Yamauchi, 2005). The public awareness toward NPO is also growing through civil movements such as environment protection activities[8]. The awareness towards social problems relates with the concept of social capital.

Social Capital and Education as a Social Issue

Social capital study deals with its institutional concept, specifically relating with the participation into civil movements towards community and country (e.g. Putnam, 1993, 2000; McClenaghan, 2000), and with cultural aspect as trust and norms (e.g. Fukuyama, 1995, 1999). The definition of social capital is various and requires sophisticated measurements and focusing on its sources or results also makes us take different approaches.

Social capital has both functional advantages and negative effects. It brings advantages not only to the member of a group and to the group he/she belongs to but also the members who do not belong to at sometimes, and meantime, it may bring disadvantages to the out-group members because the in-group members keep it within (e.g. Granovetter, 1973; Coleman, 1998, 1990; Burt, 1997; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001). The common understanding is that it is related with education and community/society's development (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986; Evans, 1996; Coleman, 1998; Woolcock, 1998; Fukuyama, 2001; OECD, 2001). It can be generally categorized into the bonding and bridging types (e.g. Putnam, 1993; Narayan, 1999). The bonding social capital inquires the strength of tie as assistance among the group members, and the bridging one takes the help and cooperation between groups into account. The level of study target changes the scope of measurement, especially today when ICT as the information flow is rapidly developing (e.g. Fukuyama, 2001).

School education tends to be regarded as panacea for social problems because it is believed the economic nation was established by efficient formal education in the Japanese history. But more attention is recently paid to the results of international and domestic students assessments[9]. Inasmuch as the youth population declines and anyone could enter university[10] entrance examination is still competitive and parents want their children to go to

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[7] NPO is imagined dealing with only domestic issues in Japan, while international cooperation is understood as NGO's activities. This article uses the term NPO, including NGO which only targets domestic issues. The government set so-called "NPO Law" in 1998 to encourage their activities.

[8] The first public recognition to NPO/NGOs appeared in 1995 when they contributed to the recovery from the Kobe enormous earthquake with 5000 casualties. Recent awareness and participation are growing with the movement for nature conservation due to the Kyoto Protocol and private companies' TV commercials.

[9] The third results of the first cycle of OECD-PISA was opened public in December 2007, and Japan's lower ranking and motivation to study were criticized. The national academic test, targeted all of the sixth and ninth graders across Japan, was conducted after a long pause since 1964 due to criticism against lower academic knowledge among children. Its results were opened in 2007 and 2008, and the educationalists pointed out the students were good at basic knowledge but not at its application. The public general recognition about the student's knowledge is unsavory, influenced by media.

[10] All the high school graduates could theoretically enter university because the capacity of universities will become larger than the population of the graduates.

good private school because the public one is not trusted[11]. Even though the youth achieve the highest level of education and receive doctor degree, 40 to 65% of them can not find a permanent job, and about 10% are socially missing[12] (Mizuki, 2007). Too strong emphasis seems to be given to the victory in examination among students, because the score is the only visual indicator. Students personal efforts should, of course, be paid off at the individual level. However, they can not equally return when their sources of social capital are not fair from the group they belong to. In other words, we are missing something fundamental in attributing personal efforts to their situation but should take more social factors into consideration.

Social capital is cultivated in the society and it is interactive. The specific forms of social capital can be nurtured as trust and norms most effectively through formal education and as the sense of belongings to the community and the participation into the society through social interaction. As the framework of lifelong learning shows below, the outcomes of unintended learning and activities can be accumulated as social capital in the individuals and groups.

Scope of Lifelong Learning in Japan

Education and learning aims to foster the sound mind and personality of learners (children and adults). Lifelong learning (LLL) in Japan covers all the education and learning, from pre-school education and school education to informal learning - intended in learning activities and unintended in daily life -, so that any human activities, including leisure activities, could be comprised as LLL if a learner obtains something valuable as a result.

The Japanese people also buy learning opportunities to obtain mental satisfaction, and therefore, there is an aspect of consumption in LLL. Sports and volunteer activities are included in LLL when they bring a lesson to the actor, in so far as the process of these activities generally has some educational contents such as skills for cooperation and review of themselves through interactions with others. Figure 1 shows the scope of LLL in Japan. Both intended and unintended learning activities are categorized into LLL, but the shadowed part without learning as a result is not included. This could be because self-actualization by education and/or learning is understood important in the life, which is assured by high economic and qualified medical backups, but not mainly understood human development for economic growth. Pure learning for skills is taken as rather training and not as equivalently valuable as education[13].

Another characteristic is LLL in Japan is separated from religious domains. The Japanese public education system has been ensured to be strictly secular since the end of the Second World War in 1945 when the system was judged not suitable to the democracy,

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[11] Media pick up inappropriate behavior in public school so that people have doubt about the quality of its education in classroom. The entrance exam even to kindergartens is common in Tokyo.

[12] This includes confirmed death such as suicide.

[13] "*Kunren*" stands for training in Japanese and includes the training of dog, and technical and vocational training in formal education system. "*Kenshuu*" is the training for the employees and has the implicit message of the enforced participation. Comparing with them, "*gakushuu*" for learning and "*kyouiku*" for education are more noble acts and include the aspect of human inner development. Especially, "*gakushuu*" means self-learning. Lifelong learning is "*shougai gakushuu*" in Japanese and can be understood the meaning of haut act of learning for the personal development.

promoted by the occupying Americans. As for LLL, new system was built such as Kominkan (community learning center).

	Learning in education/training activity	Self-learning	Unintended learning	Leisure without learning
Characteristics of learning	Learn by participating the activity whose purpose is to make someone learn.	Self-learn without educational institute's help	Learn something as a result of daily activities	Learning does not happen as a result of the activity
Example	Learners received training in company/education in school	Reading a book for learning	Learners found something valuable from travel.	Actors did not learn anything after the activity.
Intended/ unintended	Intended		Unintended	-

Figure 1. The scope of LLL in Japan covers the activities in which actors learn something (Okamoto, 1996, p.7).

Strength and Weakness of LLL in Japan

While recurrent education brought many adults into school again, the Japanese "social education" or LLL is rather unique because it contains education for adults with facilities as a special building in community. Besides schools, various institutes for social education in Japan have been set. "Kominkan" is one of the most popular one[14]. The number of Kominkan is 17,143 as of 2005 (National Institute for Educational Policy Research Social Education Practice Research Center, 2006) and 90 % of municipalities set it.

Kominkan, literally translated "Citizen's House," is defined as the institute whose purpose is to provide the people living in the area of municipality with the education, learning, and cultural operation so that it contributes to the promotion of people's learning, health, cultivation of personality, daily cultures, and social welfare, according to Social Education Law: Article 20. The Ministry of Education encouraged to set Kominkan as a focal point of social education in community in 1946, and Kominkan became a symbol of democracy[15]. Social Education Law was set in 1949 and defined Kominkan's function. It is set by the education committee of municipal governments, not the central government, and managed by neighbor residents.

The educational service provided by Kominkan is categorized into three: the opportunity of education and learning, the place to learn, and counseling. It holds lessons or

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[14] Other institutes are public library, museum, lifelong learning center, "*Seinen no ie* (camping lodge for the youth and the public)," women's education institute, audio-visual center, culture center, health center, welfare center, and sports gym.

[15] This implicit function is quite similar with "*Halk Evleri*" to promote secularism during the early stage of the Republic of Turkey.

courses, training, and exhibition as the first service and targets wide range of learners from the youth to the elders in theory. The main target, however, is adults. Residents can use Kominkan for their activities such as group meeting and events and also borrow equipments they need for the activities. Counseling is for residents to request and discuss for their needs and for Kominkan to check the effective supply with limited resources.

A Case Study: Education and Development of Local Community

Method and Limitation

The author and the experts of Education for All and LLL observed the case shown below as a study visit program, organized by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research and the Asia/Pacific Centre for UNESCO, on October 11, 2007. The target field was Takasaki City, located 105 km north away from Tokyo. The population of Takasaki City is 346,318 as of April 1, 2008[16]. More specifically, three entities were visited to observe and interview with: Takasaki City University of Economics, a Kominkan in Takasaki, and "Job Cafe Takasaki."

Takasaki City University of Economics is a small-size but the largest Takasaki city municipal university and has 2,161 students and 48 teaching staff in the Department of Economics and Business Management and 1,724 and 43 in the Department of Regional Policy, Regional Development, and Tourism as of May 1, 2007[17]. Tsuneya Sakurai, associate professor, and his students were interviewed with for the whole project management. The Kominkan in Kurabuchi district from 40-minute ride from the central Takasaki was a key locus of communication and cooperation among the University and its students, local farmers, and Takasaki municipal government. The director of Kurabuchi Kominkan, the chief of city development and the chief responsible for the industry sector of Takasaki municipal government were interviewed with for the function and cooperative activitie. Three University students who served as volunteers and facilitators at the Kominkan also explained us their workshops in which local farmers and local policymakers participated. The representative of farmers explained organic farming innovation in Takasaki. At "Job-Cafe Takasaki," the head of the NPO illustrated the organization management, and the representative of the student volunteers in the cafe management explained the specific activities.

Although the observation and analysis on the present case is limited because the series of interview took some hours within one day, it shows a functional collaboration based on social supports between university, local government, and private sector, for making results of better employment of the youth, stronger agriculture, and more students come to involve into the local community. The Japanese local cities today have a problem of young labors moving into urban areas. The situation is that both local and urban cities are not able to be sustainable for rapid ageing status in countryside and for unhealthy living conditions due to over-crowded cities. The Takasaki case prevented them from their migration into big cities by getting them socially involved into community development along with University.

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[16] It was 32,467 in 1900 when the city was formed. Retrieved 2008, April 2, 2008 from Takasaki City Web site: http://www.city.takasaki.gunma.jp/gaiyou/

[17] Retrieved 2008, April 2 from Takasaki City University of Economics Web site: http://www.tcue.ac.jp/about/number.htm

Takasaki's Project

Takasaki City University of Economics is not a "brand" university as much as University of Tokyo, to which many education-conscious parents want to send their children, but students from all across Japan and overseas are interested in community development and enter the university. Three characteristics of its engagement to the community can be described here. One is that the students serve as volunteers for working in organic agriculture, and some students become to want to be farmers. Japan, used to be an agriculture country, has downsized domestic farming industry for a long period to develop more efficient economy by importing the products instead. But domestic organic agricultural products are recently very popular because people's mind is sensitive against the risk of cheap imported products. The quality becomes the top value for meals. The students offer labor force to the local agriculture as a part of university course. The university and Kominkan organize a constant meeting to exchange ideas between farmers, farming experts, and students for development of agriculture and community through workshops. The participatory approach is introduced and the students facilitates to motivate the farmers join the discussion because some farmers are not used to discussion.

Secondly, the job information is provided by students themselves. Although job hunting is still hard for the students in local area while the Japanese economy is recovering in recent years after long term recession after 2000, the project has provided the information and lightened pressure on the individual students for job hunting. Many students worry about working in the high pressure today because they watched their father's generation suddenly lost their job during the recession. The student groups organize to interview with many kinds of occupations and broadcast on local radio and the web. The information is summarized from the student's view.

The third one is assistance for job hunting. The "Job Cafe" are set for across the country 46 prefectures in Japan by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. "Hello Work" is also set by Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare for general information for job hunting[18], but "Job Cafe" targets the people between 15 and 34. The Cafe does not have any function of serving tea or coffee but provides the space of social interaction for the youth. "Job Cafe" Takasaki brings job information from companies to the youth. The ratio between male and female visitors is 60:40, and that of finding a job is 40:60, according to the managing NPO head. A local NPO and 12 students participated in the management and more than 100 are supporters. The half visitors have no permanent job, and two out of ten visitors are students[19]. The other half are those who have job but come to talk about a better one. The Cafe's vision is that it is a community to build relationships between visitors and staff, including counselors. It is not just a counseling place for one by one but a visitor can feel home with a lot of support from all the staff. The staff share the information for suitable job from companies to each individual. The retainment rate through the Takasaki case is above 70%, and it is very high, comparing with other ones in other "Job Cafe" and "Hello Work"

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[18] "Hello Work" consigns vocational training to private vocational schools and its tuition is bourned by the Ministry. The number of "Hello Work" is decided to decrease for downsizing public officers as a part of administration reform but the online service becomes more accessible.

[19] Generally speaking, almost 100 % of the Japanese children go to high school and about 50% go to university. The visiting students here are from universities.

The Japanese university students generally work for a part-time-job not for their working experience but mostly for money. The students from Takasaki City University of Economics who work for agriculture and Cafe are volunteers with small amount of financial support and university's credits. They take part into the project for their working experience and, as a result of active participation, develop human network and high-level communication skills such as ICT use.

The projects in Takasaki succeeded in providing opportunities for all the stakeholder groups. University can call in students and send them to farmers for a learning opportunity while its teaching staff get involved into the project as advisors. The students themselves have working experience prior to their graduation which could be comparatively advantageous, learn something as a volunteer facilitator, and develop the sense of belongings to the community. The government side improves the employment rate of the youth, which is hard for any local governments, as a result of the above. Farmers developed stronger brand of agricultural products with the knowledge from experts, labor of the students, and access to them at Kominkan.

However, university has two issues to tackle. One is the gap or dilemma to match the needs from the local companies, because the Ministry's requests are different from them. For example, they want simple foreign labor but not the Japanese youth who can hardly continue hard physical works[20]. The other is the will of university staff. Many teaching staff believe the project has no relationships with academic research. The research by higher education institute can be advisory to the local government so that the staff would be required the understanding and supports to the project as the university is connected with local community.

Discussion

Social Capital and Human Capital for Sustainable Development

In addition to the advantageous aspect in hardware of Kominkan, LLL is crucial for community development because it provides various learning opportunities. Even though the outcome of the learning is not shown as specific numbers, informal relationship is formed in the learning process and it accumulates social capital. The students experience and learn something as being a facilitator in Kominkan because educational effects appear not only based on school education since all the educational and learning activities are allocated on the axis between formal and informal education (Rogers, 2004). Their participation in community development promotes public awareness because it brings benefit to the individuals as the sense of belonging and social supports. Japanese formal education is strongly expected to educate children for better academic performance but it should be more able to nourish the child's awareness of a membership to the community by collaborative works with outer actors.

Volunteering may mean mutual assistance or potential for it as a direct result of social capital. In the present case study the students work for agriculture without payment receive little financial accumulation (economical capital) and limited educational achievement (human capital) as credits of the university. But they think of being a farmer in the future as a

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[20] This is similar across developed countries. Germany, for example, opened the labor market especially for simple labors.

member of the local community and receive information and opportunities for their job hunting and counseling. This is more beneficial than what the individual students can receive by their ability only. As Maruyama (2008) analyzes the community development in Turkey after the earthquake and concludes sustainable development stands with the good balance between economic, human, and social capital, the present study has the strength of direction for accumulation of social capital through their projects.

Participation of the Youth

The young Japanese people are shy and sometimes traditionally required being shame on being ignorance in front of the seniors. The public projects often accept their head as a retirement job from governmental organizations, and their heads are sometimes lowly motivated to commit the project's goals. This creates the atmosphere where the young people feel hesitated to involve. The whole society seems to have too many problems and the young people tend to imagine hopeless future. This is one of the main reasons why the Japanese youth is indifferent about social issues because they feel impotence in the problems.

The present case provides the youth with beneficial information (contents) for their job hunting by popular media (means/channel) such as the internet and local radio. The contents have been already provided for a long time, but recent ICT development and its use by mobile phone are the key to get the younger generation to involve into the community development. Moreover, the contents are made by the participating youth. ICT is new to the older generation but quite easy for the youth feeling confident with it. The adults intentionally asked the youth to help for ICT and take part in the projects. The participating people obtain lessons as outcomes of activities, in addition to the feeling of usefulness as an identity in the society.

Bridging for Community Development: Collaboration Between Sectors

The advantage of Takasaki's cafe is collaboration among government, university, and private sectors. The present case shows the benefit to all the sectors as overlooked. The confidence and perceptions of personal effectiveness increased, each group receives benefit for itself, and community development was promoted. This is because "social capital enhancement could be continued as having direct links with community development adult education in that community development is generally defined as a social learning process; a learning process which serves to empower individuals and social groups by involving them as citizens in collective activities aimed at socio-economic regeneration, development and change (McClenaghan, 2000, p.566)." While neo-liberal economic situation drives people for economic benefit, this case is an example of self reliance. As Tsurumi (1989) emphasizes the importance of endogenous development in which the self-reliance create the society based on culture/tradition and indigenous natural ecosystem suitable to their local unique conditions while they matching external knowledge, skills, and systems.

In addition to that Fukuyama (2001) explains educational institutions increase human and social capital as the greatest direct ability of the government[21], the author would like to point out that social capital can contribute towards education because social capital runs circular and is interactive. In other words, the synergy can be expected between education and

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[21] However, we should also keep in mind that the government has negative impact on building social capital (Fukuyama, 2001, p.18).

social capital. Its potential could be enlarged by hardware and human network of Kominkan in Japan. The collaborations, could mean the bridging social capital, among more actors are necessary because actors for sustainability exist at the local level.

Conclusion

Japan rushed to modernization in order to avoid from being occupied from the Great Powers at the end of nineteenth century and tried to catch up the Western economies after the lost war in the 1940s until it became an economic power in the 1980s. The central government took a very strong initiative to control the whole country efficiently and successfully led the country up to one of the most developed economies in the world. Recent neo-liberal movements, promoted strongly by the popular Koizumi Administration between 2001 and 2006, accelerated privatization aiming at so-called small government and cut off public services in order to go along with the process of globalization or "the next society" requiring the social shift. It is still a necessary reform for new age and Japan needs more balanced development because rapid economic growth is not expected anymore[22], although the past successful experience can not leave many politicians' image of development.

This social structure broke some part of the original/traditional equity but created the unexpected strong culture of win-or-lose among the Japanese. Traditional virtues in local communities were collapsed in the process of modernization. In other words, Japan built the society (*gesellschaft*) and lost the communities (*gemeinschaft*). There are many impenetrable problems today such as child crime and disorder, severe youth population decline while the elders dying alone, and very low motivation to work among the youth[23]. Economic profit motivates the limited people because the lower social layer is clearly reproduced and those people tend to lose hope and incentives in Japan (Kariya, 2001). The reaction to the society such as the increase of NPOs could be regarded as a mandate towards *gemeinschaft* at the local level because some small local governments start to face financial bankruptcy and NPOs recognize it as their social mission. Making community development reliable and sustainable requires the cooperation within a group and collaboration between different groups.

In the case study, inter-generation collaboration and learning was observed between local original residents, new local NPO, and formal education institutes. The bridged situation brings advantages to individuals, communities and networks, which could return benefits to all. Because the Japanese society today expects self-responsibility based on human capital and shown by economic/physical capital, the concept of social capital should be utilized effectively more than ever. As Hofstede (2001) shows the similarities between Japan and Turkey in the international comparative characteristics[24], the analysis could be also beneficial to the Turkish society.

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[22] United Nations, 2000.

[23] Child population declines, and the ratio of senior population will be one out of three Japanese soon: The proportion of children age below 15 is 13.8% and that of the age 65 and over is 20.2 % of total population in 2005. Their estimate is 11.8 (2015), 10.0 (2025), 9.5 (2035) for children, while 26.9, 30.5, and 33.7 for the aged in the same years (National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2008, table 2-8).

[24] Hofstede examines four main aspects of cultures across more than 50 countries. Three aspects, "Power Distance," "Uncertainty Avoidance," and "Individualism and Collectivism" show the similarities between the two countries but not in "Masculinity and Femininity."

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