

The Lifelong Learning Policies in England and Japan: A Means of Building Social Capital?

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[Abstract]

The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between 'lifelong learning' and 'social capital' in the context of England and Japan. The paper discusses whether the current lifelong learning policies of the countries are generating social capital. The paper argues that the two countries' lifelong learning policies are not necessarily contributing to the building of social capital. In England, the over-emphasis on skills and the over-simplification of the inclusion policies conflict with a criterion of social capital, 'social connections'; and in Japan, the spiritual approach and the inexperience of democratic processes conflict with a criterion of social capital, 'a public good' aspect. The two countries have different obstacles, but the common difficulty is about 'measurement'.

Introduction

Both 'lifelong learning' and 'social capital' have increasingly been debated in the educational and social policy arena. The starting point of this paper was a question: what is the relationship between the two? The question is narrowed down, and this paper explores whether 'lifelong learning' – more precisely, lifelong learning policies – can be a generator of 'social capital'. 'Policies' refer to governments' prioritised agendas as well as the initiatives they implement.

This paper also attempts to provide a comparative analysis of the cases in England and Japan. Both the English and the Japanese governments have positioned 'lifelong learning' as an important social reform policy as well as an education reform policy. However, the countries have different approaches to the development of lifelong learning, which can be identified in their lifelong learning policies. How that is reflected in terms of social capital is discussed.

The paper's argument is that the current lifelong learning policies in England and Japan are not necessarily contributing to the building of social capital because the particular features of the policies that conflict with certain elements of social capital. In England, the over-

emphasis on skills and the over-simplification of the inclusion policies can be a barrier to enhancing 'social connections'; in Japan, the spiritual approach and the immature democratic process can obstruct 'a public good' aspect of social capital.

The structure of the paper is as follows. The following section discusses 'social capital'. In the next section, the current lifelong learning policies in England and Japan are outlined, and the potential of the building of social capital through the policies is examined. And then, the potential is critically discussed. The final section is the conclusion. The paper begins with a brief account of 'social capital'.

Defining 'Social Capital'

The rise of social capital theory can be traced back to de Tocqueville's work of 1956 (de Tocqueville cited in Preston and Green, 2002, p.7) and since then, theorising and re-theorising 'social capital' has been taken up by a number of social scientists. In the past decade, political ideologies and academic interests have increasingly come to encompass social capital theories (PIU, 2002, p.9). Several explanations can be identified to the expansion of the use of the concept.

In general, 'social capital' which includes key elements such as trust, networks, norms, reciprocity, memberships or associations is highly attractive to not only academics, but also policy-makers. To scholars, the concept enables broader discourse 'across a variety of disciplines'; politically, the concept goes hand in hand with the politics of the centre-left which emphasises the adaptation to the global economy and social change (Schuller *et al.*, 2000, p.1). To policy-makers: "Social capital should be seen as giving policymakers useful insights into the importance of community, the social fabric and social relations at the individual, community and societal level (PIU, 2002, p.73)."

A more specific and persuasive explanation lies in the role of social capital in economics. 'The missing link', as Fine and Green (2000, p.79) put it, was needed to fill out what had been absent in understanding economic development: "mainstream economics has previously excluded the social and now it is time to bring it back in (*Ibid.*)."

The recognition of 'the missing link' stemmed from the limitations of the traditional paradigm of economics. In understanding 'non-market conforming behaviours', social capital is the solution to overcoming the limitations of 'new neo-classical economics'. Social capital, hence, is 'an immensely flexible conceptual tool' in explaining previously missed-out social phenomena (Preston and Green, 2002, p.8). Furthermore, not only in economics, but also in social science as a whole, the predominant contemporary economic model which has neglected non-market factors, e.g. norms, values, networks, is regarded failure. The potential of social capital as 'an empirical analytical concept' has been acknowledged (Edwards and Fowley, 1998, p.128).

Simultaneously, the conceptual clarity and coherence of 'social capital' is being questioned (e.g. Edward and Foley, 1998). The diversity of approaches to social capital is also indicated.

Another way of interpreting this diversity is due to the 'immaturity' of the concept stemming from 'a rapid proliferation' (Schuller *et al.*, 2000). Due to this immaturity, defining 'social capital' is not straightforward. The approach that this paper takes is first, to draw the operational criteria from the existing literature; and second, to explore the ways in which the concept has been interpreted in the earlier work. There are two criteria that this paper borrows. The first criterion is that social capital exists in the three layers of 'social connections' (Putnam, 1995, p.66), i.e. 'bonding', 'bridging' (Putnam, 2000, pp.22-23) and 'linking' (Woolcock, 2001, p.4). The second criterion is that "social capital is defined by its functions (Coleman, 1988, p.98)", and the functions should have a 'public goods quality (p.118)'.

The argument for the first criterion is that lifelong learning policies are national policies, and therefore the building of social capital should be examined at the national level as well. 'Bonding' social capital tends to reinforce 'exclusive identities and homogeneous groups', is good for 'undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity' and can create 'strong in-group loyalty' with the possibility of 'out-group antagonism': e.g. amongst family members or amongst members of an ethnic group. By contrast, 'bridging' social capital is 'outward looking and involves people across diverse social cleavages': e.g. with business associates or amongst friends from different ethnic groups. It is better for 'linkage to external assets and for information diffusion' and can 'generate broader identities and reciprocity' (Putnam, 2000, pp.22-23; PIU, 2002, pp.11-12). Putnam indicates that there may well be 'trade-offs' between the two (p.362). 'Linking' social capital refers to 'connections between those with differing levels of power or social status': e.g. between the political elite and the public or between individuals from different social classes (Woolcock cited in PIU, 2002, p.12).

Putnam defines 'social capital' as: "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (1995, p.67)." "The social networks' produce 'the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness' (2000 cited in Preston and Green, 2002, p.10). It should be noted, as Preston and Green point out, Putnam's empirical work mainly concerns the level of individual behaviour, and the weakness of this approach is in explaining the societal/national level (2002, pp.10-15). However in principle, Putnam acknowledges 'the relational nature of social capital (p.15)', i.e. 'bonding' and 'bridging' social capital.

The argument for the second criterion – a 'public good quality' – is that being public policy, lifelong learning policies should benefit the public, not a certain individual or individuals. Coleman emphasises the duality of social capital: "A property shared by most forms of social capital that differentiates it from other forms of capital is its public good aspect (Coleman, 1988, p.119)." In other words, social capital treats; "norms, networks and trust' that constitute its central concern as properties of social relations as well as individual attributes (1988 cited in Preston and Green, 2002, p.2)."

Unlike physical and human capital, social capital is shared by a group or groups of individuals – a community or a society – and can be accessed by all members of the group or the groups. In other words, the public is prioritised over individuals, as Coleman puts it: “the kinds of social structures that make possible social norms and the sanctions that enforce them do not benefit primarily the person or persons whose efforts would be necessary to bring them about, but benefit all those who are part of such a structure (p.116)”. ‘A public good’ is about benefiting both inside and outside the structure; but if the benefit is only within the structure, that is not a public good, but a ‘club’ (p.104) good.

The distinction of the two sides of social capital is termed as ‘public civiness’ and ‘private civiness’ by Stolle and Rochon (1998, p.48). It is argued that the operation of structures, groups and associations contributes not only within the groups themselves, but also to the building of a society (*Ibid.*) What determines whether the civiness is public or private is, according to Szreter, the ‘quality’ of the structure, group or association:

Social capital . . . depends on the quality of the set of relationships of a social group. It can never be reduced to the mere possession or attribute of an individual. It results from the communicative capacities of a group: something shared in common and in which all participate. The relationships among the participants must be uncoerced and set on a basis of formal equality and mutual respect (2000, p.57).

Furthermore, ‘personalized civiness’ – an individual benefit – can lead to ‘the dark side’ as Putnam warns (2000, pp.350-363). Taking youth gangs as an example, Putnam indicates that social capital, e.g. networks and norms, may be fostered within such groups, but ‘the detriment of the wider society’ cannot be neglected (1995 cited in Stolle and Rochon, 1998, p.48). ‘High levels of personalized civiness’ can be interpreted as ‘strong member-oriented bonds’ (Stolle and Rochon, 1998, p.48), but potential downsides are always there.

Therefore, understanding social capital as, “*the networks, shared norms, values and understandings* that facilitate co-operation within or among groups (OECD, 2002, emphasis added)” or “*the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape* the quality and quantity of society’s social interactions (World Bank, 2002, emphasis added)” implies a danger, depending on what the ‘the networks, shared norms, values and understandings’ or ‘the institutions, relationships and norms’ are.

Coleman also identifies the three forms of social capital: “obligations and expectations, which depend on trustworthiness of the social environment, information-flow capability of the social structure and norms accompanied by sanctions (p.119).” What is emphasised is ‘reciprocity’: in doing a good, the ‘social debt’ will be repaid; but in failing social responsibilities or obligations and flouting social norms, there will be sanctions (Riddell, Baron and Wilson, 1999, p.51). From the notion of ‘reciprocity’, an important element of ‘a public good/public

civiness' which distinguishes social capital from other forms of capital can be identified.

For operational use, this paper draws a definition of social capital mainly from Putnam and Coleman. Before moving on, this section finishes by offering a brief picture of how the two countries are perceived in terms of their development of social capital. Some world-wide survey findings are used to show the degree of social capital development in England and Japan. Usually the conclusion is that the UK has relatively low social capital and Japan has relatively high social capital. For example, in the World Values Survey, social capital is measured by posing a question to interviewees: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" The ratio of the interviewees who answered yes was 31 percent in the UK and 46 percent in Japan (cited in PIU, 2002, pp.14-15).

In Fukuyama's work as well, Japan is categorised as one of the societies in which the level of social capital is high. Treating social capital as 'the crucible of trust'¹¹, Fukuyama argues that the well-being and competitiveness of the nation depend on the level of trust in the society. Moreover, a 'high-trust society' Japan is located as "the most appropriate form of 'spontaneous sociability'" (Schuller et al., 2000, p.16). On the other hand, according to Szreter, Britain has seen a decrease in social capital particularly amongst the working-classes since the Thatcher years. The public sector's social services and the state education were disadvantaged most by Thatcher's privatisation policies. The 'class-divided citizenry' was exacerbated, and the 'systematic disparity in the educational opportunities' became greater (2000, pp.76-77). This is still an unsolved problem.

The persuasiveness of the judgement is debatable, but the point here is not to discuss the validity of the analyses but to present the general recognition that 'England has low social capital' and 'Japan has high social capital'. Keeping this in mind, the paper now moves on to examine the lifelong learning policies in the two countries.

The Lifelong Learning Policies in England

This section argues that currently, the English government takes a two-dimensional approach to lifelong learning which emphasises both economic and social ends. The lifelong learning policies for social ends, e.g. social inclusion, have potential to lead to social capital. The Labour government's approach is briefly outlined first.

It is widely acknowledged that the current development of lifelong learning in England focuses on economic growth and competitiveness (e.g. Tight, 1998; NATFE, 1999; Coffield, 2000b; Wolf, 2002). The government treats the weakness in the performance in basic and intermediate skills as problematic, and lifelong learning is seen as a strategy to overcome the weakness. The government's approach to link 'learning' directly to 'the economy' is a legacy in England (Hodgson and Spours, 1999; Power and Whitty, 1999). Since the 1970s,

'the importance of human capital within industry and inside education' has repeatedly been pointed out. The point was made for example by the Manpower Services Commission which actively operated in the area of vocational training until the end of 1980s (Ainley and Corney, 1990). 20 years later, *The Learning Age*, the first substantial policy document on lifelong learning, stands on the same principle:

"Education is the best economic policy we have (DfEE, 1998a, p.9)"; "Knowledge and skills are now the key drivers of innovation and change (DfEE, 2000 quoted in Hyland, 2002, p.248)"; "Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century (DfEE, 1998a, p.7)."

The arrival of social concerns came with New Labour. In addition to skills shortage, 'the learning divide' (Sargant *et al.*, 1997), skills gaps, exclusion and inequity are identified as problems. The education system had been characterised as 'the production of a small highly educated elite and a large mass of relatively poorly qualified leavers (Maguire, 1991, p.49)', however after 1997, the Labour Administration began taking concrete action. Their political standpoint i.e. the Third Way has a part to play in the two-dimensional approach. To adjust to the changing world of 'globalisation and self-reflexivity', the Third Way is the 'appropriate' form of 'a coherent and distinctive reconstruction of the state, civil society and welfare' (Giddens, 1998 cited in Power and Whitty, 1999, p.542).

The Third Way²⁾ treats 'lifelong learning' as an essential policy to educational and social reform. In 1998, *The Learning Age*, the first policy document to encompass both social and economic aims, was published. As a strategic measure to realise a 'social investment State', lifelong learning is, as Hodgson and Spours put it: "the key to the development of an inclusive and just society whose economy is successfully competitive in the global market-place (1999, p.5)." Sitting well with the principle of the Third Way, lifelong learning is treated as both a means and an end in providing education and training, employment and social inclusion.

The two dimensions of the lifelong learning policies in England are, thus, on the one hand, the emphasis on skills and knowledge for the purpose of economic growth and competitiveness, and on the other hand, the enhancement of accessibility to learning and the increase of learning opportunities to make the society inclusive and balanced. As the government clearly says, the former is the development of human capital. Hence, the section turns to concentrate on the social side of the lifelong learning policies which are more relevant to social capital.

The seriousness and urgency of societal problems have been reinforced by some convincing findings of research. The outcome of the UK-wide survey on adult participation in education and learning, *The Learning Divide* (Sargant *et al.*, 1997) made imbalance, inequity and skills gaps visible, reaffirming the deepness of the problem. The impact of *A Fresh Start* was also tremendous with the finding that seven million adults lacked basic literacy (DfEE, 1999b). Reacting to this, the government created the policy action paper *Better Basic Skills* declaring:

"Government's committed to doing something dramatic about this (2000)." The High Skills Project was also significant research which made the UK's 'bi-polar profile of skills' stand out. The polarity of skills will continue to produce income inequality based on the division of employment (Green and Sakamoto-Vandenburg, 2001). The Labour Administration admitted that it has become divided 'between the information rich and the information poor (DfEE, 1999c, p.13)' or between those who can enjoy privilege of learning and those who have obstacles which prevent them from learning (DfEE, 1998b). The division creates a group of people with low skills and poor qualifications, who are 'locked in a cycle of disadvantage (DfEE, 1999c, p.6)'.

To diminish the long-lasting gap and to increase cohesion, the Labour government takes substantial measures which are represented by a cross-cutting approach based on joined-up thinking. Stemming from the government's priority of the reform and modernisation of the public services, the approach emphasises strengthening the capacity of Whitehall and swift delivery (Cabinet Office, 2002). Treasury plays a large part in joining-up thinking through the Spending Reviews. Spending Reviews are to provide 'Cross-Cutting Reviews of policy areas that cut across traditional departmental boundaries' (Treasury, 2002). 2002 Spending Review prioritises education to realise 'a fair, prosperous and inclusive society' (*Ibid.*). The Reviews are made against Public Service Agreements (PSAs), which are the detailed outcomes that the Departments are expected to deliver within their budgets. PSA targets are set for the government to monitor the progress of each Department and for Parliament and the public to evaluate achievements of the Departments (*Ibid.*).

The government's commitment to bring the disadvantaged population into learning can be seen in the PSAs set for the DfES. Four out of six objectives are related to inclusion and participation: 'pupil inclusion'; 'raising attainment at 14-19'; 'improving the skills of young people and adults, raising participation and quality in post-16 learning provision'; 'tackling the adult skills deficit' (*Ibid.*). The social inclusion agendas are made more achievable for realistic inclusiveness: for the adult workforce in particular, the target was lowered to NVQ Level 2³ compared with Level 3 of the previous Administration (Department for Education and Department for Employment, 1995). Targeting the disadvantaged population, the current Labour government is committed to help changing the life of those people by offering learning opportunities.

Within the Cabinet Office, Units which function across the Departments and report directly to Prime Minister have been established. The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) established in 1997 has an important role in tackling exclusion and inequity. The SEU's action plan, *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* assures delivering 'real change', aiming to deliver 'mainstream services for everyone' and to 'reintegrate people who have fallen through the net' (SEU, 2002). For more effective and efficient delivery, in 2002, the SEU was relocated within the new cross-cutting Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in which the Neighbourhood

Renewal Unit (NRU) was also set up (SEU, 2002). The NRU directly acts on the deprived areas, taking the most appropriate measures to the 'core problems' and raising awareness of the local population (NRU, 2002). *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal* is put into practice with initiatives such as: Neighbourhood Renewal Fund which provides extra resources for 88 of the most deprived local authorities; the New Deal for Communities Programme and its network which are to support renewal in an intensive and co-ordinated way, focusing on race equality issues (NRU, 2002); the Children's Fund which provides extra funding for local services to prevent children's exclusion (SEU, 2002).

Together with these cross-departmental programmes, the DfES also runs quite a few schemes following the PSAs, targeting 'those who are not learning'. Learning Partnerships provides local Learning and Skills Councils an understanding of local needs to bring coherence and co-ordination to post-16 learning (DfES, 2002e). Targeting 16-18 year olds, Learning Gateway helps those who are disengaged from learning because of the lack of skills, attitudes or of social obstacles to enter mainstream learning opportunities or make a successful transition from school to subsequent learning (DfES, 2002d). For a similar purpose, Connexions offers integrated advice, services and support for 13 to 19 year olds (DfES, 2002b). More generally, University for Industry (Ufi), operating in partnership with learndirect, a publicly-funded online learning service network, provides learning opportunities to young people and adults who seek employment or further learning (Ufi, 2002). Uniting various partners from different sectors, these projects intend to regenerate learning in communities and to promote cohesion.

The Adult and Community Learning Fund is an important initiative for widening participation and improving standards of basic skills. The Fund aims to promote active citizenship and strengthen the family and the neighbourhood as well as to better the local economy (DfES, 2002a). Learning City Network, which is composed of Learning Towns and Cities, is for cities and towns to share and exchange practice of learning (DfES, 2002f). Connecting learning to social regeneration, these schemes aim to develop effective local partnerships between all sectors of the community and to support and motivate individuals and employers to participate in learning.

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a means of providing information and delivering learning has been one of the priorities of the government. ICT has "a massive effect on how we live, work and learn (DfES, 2002h, p.1)". For those who have limited or no skills in using ICTs, UK Online Centres offer learning opportunities (DfES, 2002i). Furthermore, Ufi's learndirect is being developed as a major pedagogy of e-learning (Ufi, 2002). 'E-learning', which has flexibility to enable more people to engage in learning, is positioned as an important inclusion policy.

The policies of lifelong learning in England show the substantiality of the English

government's concern for and action on the excluded. With the cross-cutting approach, skills gaps and learning gaps are exhaustively tackled to extinguish poverty, crime and decay. 'Learning' is presented as a means for those people to get out from the hopeless present life and to enable a bright future.

From the point of view of social capital, if such social inclusion policies could help the disadvantaged population out of poverty or keep the geographically marginalised population in touch with everyday occurrences, that in itself is a public good. Once a cohesive and balanced society is achieved, it can also be understood as an accumulation of bonding, bridging and linking social capital. A society where affluent 'learning cultures' (NAGCELL, 1999) are a norm may be able to produce further social capital through the learning process and interaction. Hence, the lifelong learning policies in England which focus on social agendas are highly likely to be contributing to the building of social capital.

The Japanese government also positions lifelong learning at the centre of education reform. But the practice of lifelong learning differs dramatically from that of England.

The Lifelong Learning Policies in Japan

As contrasted with the English case where a social end is relatively new, in Japan, the development of lifelong learning has been about reforming society. This section argues that social aims dominate the lifelong learning policies in Japan and that the current emphasis on 'communities' is seemingly about social capital.

In Japan, it was at *Rinkyoushin* [the *Ad Hoc* Council], an advisory council to the Prime Minister operated in the 1980s, when lifelong learning first entered the policy domain. The Japanese government and people had identified the need to change the nature of Japanese society, *gakureki shakai* [a credential society], in which the excessive emphasis on academic background had resulted in serious problems such as delinquency and bullying. The overall rearrangement of the structure and provision of education and learning was required to replace the conventional education system. The *Rinkyoushin*'s Reports claimed 'a shift from *gakureki shakai* to a lifelong learning system' to restructure Japanese society (Ichikawa, 1995; Hood, 2001).

In the 1990s, however, new phenomena at school were emerging. First, there have been quite a few school-related vicious crimes. One of the most striking examples of extraordinary crimes is Kobe's serial killing of 1997 [*Sakakibara jiken*]. A 14 year-old male pupil conducted 'a ritual' – killing – which he said was enjoyable. His motive was not clear, but he had written letters criticising school and police (National Police Agency, 1998). Second, school came to be unable to function properly. Classes are disturbed by problematic pupils [*gakkyuu houkai*] (MESSC, 2000, p.32). The problems differ from those till the 1980s in a

sense that children and young people are becoming impatient, indifferent, apathetic and inconceivable (Fujita, 2000, pp.25-28). The target of criticism has become school, the education system and the MEXT⁴). As a response, the MEXT has come to prioritise 'children' and 'school' with 'communities' as a strategy in its education reform and development of LLL.

The *Rinkyoushin's* reform policies have been revised during the 1990s, and currently, the school education reform is titled The Education Reform Plan for the 21st Century: The Rainbow Plan – The Seven Priorities. The Priorities concern improving school by changing the system, curriculum and even 'philosophy'. 'Open and warm-hearted' Japanese should be fostered within a good environment and the collaboration of schools, families and communities (MEXT, 2002e). The significant recent implementation in school education is the New Courses of Study. The compulsory study load is reduced by 30 percent, and the five-day school week is introduced, aiming to cultivate "in children a rich spirit and strength by increasing opportunities for them to participate in outdoor activities and experience social interaction (MESSC, 2000, p.66)". Volunteering had been recommended in Integrated Study [*Sougouteki Gakushuu*] which was already implemented earlier as a primary school curriculum, but in 2002, voluntary community service [*houshi katsudou*] has made compulsory [*gimuka*] (Fujita, 2001, p.8). That the school curriculum encompasses pupils' volunteering is a new strategy to foster in children a sense of morality.

The other strand in the school reform policies is the emphasis on emotional and moral education (MESSC, 2000, pp.2-3). It was reinforced by a survey which found that: children who have rich experience of life and nature in the local community tend to have higher degree of morality and justice (MESSC, 1998b). The government began acknowledging that Japan was facing a crisis of not being able to foster next generation. Traditional values such as diligence or harmony should be succeeded to next generation. Cultivating in children 'the rules and other elements of social life' and 'an enriched humanness blessed with a sense of justice, sense of ethics and a compassionate mind' is emphasised. The whole society has to engage in 'fostering the minds' of children (MESSC, 1998a; 2000). This also stresses actualising 'a spiritually rich society' through participation in lifelong learning (MESSC, 2000).

These policies formulated are to create a lifelong learning society in which children are fostered in a bonded community and in which local people are active in community building. Depositing *gakureki shakai* was an original aim of lifelong learning, but the recent problems at school and of children have required prompt measures. The commitment of the government can be seen in the change in the Laws. The Law of Social Education and the Law of School Education are amended in 2001 (MEXT, 2002c) so that local administration can be involved in family education and the community activities of children and young people. 'Communities' have become the key in reforming school.

There has been a grass-roots phenomenon which has affected the school reform and the development of lifelong learning: public participation in voluntary activities. Triggered by the earthquake in the Hanshin region in 1995 (Shiraishi *et al.*, 2001; Yamagishi, 2002), the movement expanded, and many public interest groups have reformed as Non-profit Organisations (NPOs). This led to the enactment of the Non-profit Organisations Promotion Act in 1998. Giving approval socially to any kind of people's voluntary activities, the Act enables and encourages the public participation in social reform (Yamagishi, 2002, p.44). Volunteer groups and NPOs, and the school reform and the development of lifelong learning have had mutual effect with 'communities' as a common interest. Senuma argues that lifelong learning in Japan is shifting from government-led to public-led (1999, p.35). The expansion of grass-roots participation has contributed to bringing 'volunteering' and 'communities' into the centre of the school reform and the lifelong learning policies.

The policy-making of lifelong learning in the 1990s has been undertaken in response to the school reform and the boom of voluntary participation. The Lifelong Learning Council⁵⁾ which was in charge of policy-making for lifelong learning created six Reports. The first three Reports are about the infrastructure of lifelong learning. Four focused areas are identified – recurrent education, volunteer activities, outside-school activities and present-day agendas such as environmental issues, and the need to expand learning opportunities in communities and to link schools, families and communities is stressed [*gakusha yuugou*] (MEXT, 2002f). The establishment of a local network of the education administration, the Board of Education, the Social Education administration, citizens' organisations and education institutions is discussed, and the importance of responding to diversifying needs of the community and bringing all members of the community together is emphasised [*nettowaaku gata gyousei*] (MEXT, 2002b; Itou, 1996).

The rest of the Reports are mainly about the content of lifelong learning. The measures to foster children's *ikiru chikara* [zest for living]⁶⁾ in the community are introduced: e.g. expanding children's experiences in the community. Evaluation methods of learning outcomes are discussed as well, and three methods are recommended in particular: individual career development, volunteer activities and local community building. Also, the use of ICT to enable a 'communication network society' is stressed (MEXT, 2002f). All Reports concern about collaboration in communities in raising local children, and also voluntary activities are promoted as a means and an end of lifelong learning.

The recently-established Local Community Policy Unit [*Chiiki Seisaku Shitsu*] within the Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau shows the government's strategy to emphasise community building [*machizukuri*]. The Unit has a role in supporting and linking with the administration at prefectural and municipal levels, aiming to contribute to educational policy-making and to promote community development. The need for the Unit stems from the increase in the number of people who wish to be involved in community activities and learning in the

communities, and also from the demand for empowering local communities (MEXT, 2002d).

As can be seen, the government has come to address the issues of schools, families and communities. The new approaches such as building partnerships in a community, networking different administration and promoting original community building were brought in to involve the whole community in the promotion and implementation of lifelong learning.

The emphasis can be seen in the implementation of the lifelong learning policies. The Project for Supporting the Model of Lifelong Learning Community Building [*Shougai Gakushuu Machizukuri Moderu Shien Jigyuu*] is to create a model town which is based on lifelong learning (MEXT, 2002c, p.24). Opening schools to local communities is promoted as well; not only school facilities, but also school policies and school management are expected to open to the public (p.25). There are quite a few initiatives for supporting parents in bringing up children. Ongoing schemes include: the Networking of Supporting Child Rearing [*Kosodate Shien Nettowaaku*] which offers counselling and advice to parents; 24-hour telephone consultation (p.29). Guidebooks and videos are made to help parents who have difficulty in raising children: e.g. Family Education Diary [*Katei Kyouiku Techou*]; Home Discipline [*Shitsuke*] (MEXT, 2002b). Overlapping with school reform policies, lifelong learning policies aim to empower communities. The New National Children's Plan [*Zenkoku Shin Kodomo Puran*] is designed to respond to the five-day school week system. The Plan promotes children's rapport with a local community, making the most of local resources: e.g. supporting children's after-school or weekend activities (MEXT, 2002c, pp.24-25).

In this way, community building has become the central agenda in the area of lifelong learning. The MEXT puts it: Lifelong learning is an energy to live 'a lively life' (2000, p.1). "It is pleasurable to actively be involved in and communicate with the community through learning. . . . A society in which people enjoy learning will become a better society (p.26)." Anybody can start learning as a part of everyday life, enjoy the learning experience and share it with the society. Participation in lifelong learning is strongly encouraged through volunteering, such as visits to old people's residents or cleaning parks (p.46). With this type of participation, it is expected that 'harmony' and 'symbiosis' of the local community will be enhanced (p.54). There are other large-scale initiatives such as National Lifelong Learning Festivals [*Zenkoku Shougai Gakushuu Fesutibaru*] or the University of the Air [*Housou Daigaku*], but the majority of the current initiatives are related to children and communities. 'A lifelong learning system' is to unify school education, family education and community development.

In Japan, since 'lifelong learning' was introduced to the country, the idea has been positioned to change the nature of the society – *gakureki shakai*. As the problems of children and young people increased and became serious, the strategy to tackle the problems has been to bring up children in a strongly bonded local community. Lifelong learning has played a part in this, linking with school policies such as the five-day school week and offering supportive

initiatives in family education.

In the case of Japan, it is easy to point out the essence of social capital in the lifelong learning policies – communities, a network, bonding, collaboration and public participation. Judging from the boom of volunteer groups and NPOs coupled with the strong emphasis on community bonding in the education policies, high probability of the development of social capital can be suggested. A community where volunteer groups, NPOs, parents, neighbours and schools collaborate to foster local children can be seen as a form of a 'network'. As the survey results of some international organisations showed, it might be appropriate to conclude that Japan is a 'high-trust society'.

In short, there appears to be a good probability in both England and Japan that their lifelong learning policies are contributing to the building of social capital. Or, are they?

The final section of the paper attempts to answer this question.

The Obstacles to Building Social Capital

Both the English and the Japanese governments position 'lifelong learning' as central to the reform policy of the education systems, but the practice of lifelong learning diverges between the two countries due to the differences in their prioritised agendas. England treats 'skills' and 'inclusion' as most important, and in Japan, 'communities' is the major theme. It was suggested that lifelong learning policies which address 'inclusion' and 'communities' could be understood as the development of social capital.

This section discusses the potential of the building of social capital through the existing lifelong learning policies in England and Japan. The argument is that in both countries, there are contradictory elements that obstruct the building of social capital: in the English case, the over-emphasis of skills and the over-simplification of the inclusion policies, and in the Japanese case, spiritualism and the inexperience of democracy.

In England, the Labour government's approach to lifelong learning is two-dimensional, balancing both economic and social ends. Nevertheless, the social concerns are not independent of skills agendas and the economy. Skills are an individual property, therefore a bunch of skilful individuals does not mean it is a network or an association. However, the government takes it for granted that skills are important for quality of individual life, community development and national economic prosperity. The most obvious evidence of the obsession with skills is that the renaming of the Ministry. In 2001, the former Department for Education and Employment became the Department for Education and Skills. Bringing 'skills' in, the government explicitly declared its priority. Also, the combination of 'education' and 'skills' connotes the government's standpoint that the two are closely linked.

'Skills' have always been discussed hand in hand with 'employment' and 'the economy'. In

National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, the cause of decay is identified: "The cycle of decline for a neighbourhood almost always starts with a lack of work (SEU, 2000, p.23)." There are many neighbourhoods that have been left dependent on state benefits because of no available jobs for the working cohort. "Poverty and unemployment exacerbate a whole range of other social problems (p.7)." It is concluded that it is skills that can improve the employability of the disadvantaged and the unemployed: first, encourage them to start learning, get them basic skills and bring them back to the labour market. Therefore, social cohesion and inclusiveness are economic elements since they lead to a stable society which will then provide a basis for competitiveness (Avis, 2000).

As a matter of fact, the social inclusion policies talk about skills a lot. How 'the learning divide' was recognised was that seven million adults who did not have basic literacy 'skills'; and the way in which exclusion problems are tackled is 'skilling' the disadvantaged population, e.g. offering them training courses. As PSAs and Spending Reviews prioritise, "at least 40 percent the number of adults in the UK workforce who lack NVQ level 2 or equivalent qualifications by 2010"; "to improve the basic skill levels of 1.5 million adults by 2007" (Treasury, 2002). Also, qualifications – the outcome of skills development – are emphasised as well: "a drive to expand Modern Apprenticeships and work-relevant qualifications (*Ibid.*)".

Skills are human capital and the central aim of the social inclusion policies is the production of human capital. Coleman's interpretation of human capital explains the strategy of the Labour government in social inclusion: "Human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways (1988, p.100)"; the benefits of human capital therefore come in: "the form of a higher-paying job, more satisfying or higher-status work or even the pleasure of greater understanding of the surrounding world (p.116)", i.e. all personal benefits. As Avis indicates: "Social inclusion is predicated upon employment" with the "clear cut relation between the development of human capital and economic competitiveness (2000, p.190)." New Labour's attempt is "a new moral economy centred upon individualism held together under the banner of a socially inclusive and globally competitive society (p.186)".

As long as skills – literacy and numeracy, and NVQ Level 2 – are centred in social inclusion policies for the sake of improving individuals' employability and productivity, what the policies actually address is human capital rather than social capital. Human capital is on the individual level, therefore 'social relations' do not necessarily develop. Once individuals built up human capital, they might start engaging in community and social activities in which case social capital might grow. But that is rather a secondary effect and such an effect is unpredictable.

The second obstacle has to do with the inclusion policies, which have a risk of threatening bridging and linking social capital in particular. New Labour's concern for the disadvantaged

population is substantial but over-simplified (Ball *et al.*, 2000; Rees *et al.*, 2000; Coffield, 2000a). As the OECD straightforwardly puts it: there is "still the need for the UK to understand social exclusion more clearly in terms other than the job market (1999, p.161)". The issue of social exclusion is more complicated than New Labour's understanding of it. An ironic trend as a consequence of promoting widening participation is the emergence of 'new inequalities' (Coffield, 2000b, pp.21-22), i.e. the rise of the participation rate is because of regular learners' participating more; non-regular learners remain inactive. There is also a study which shows that 'the excluded' are not only about the working-class, but also about the middle-class. A lot of middle-class pupils exclude themselves from mainstream public provision (Whitty, 2001). "Social exclusion is 'a dual process' which operates from the 'top' as well as the 'bottom' of society (Giddens cited in Whitty, p.291)".

The simplified version of social inclusion policies has a danger of enhancing division and exclusion and as a consequence, decreasing of social capital. Families, communities and the society might become fragmented with less communication, less interest and less trust in others. Neither 'bonding', 'bridging' nor 'linking' social capital can flourish in such an environment. As Field *et al.* argue, "public policy may, entirely unintentionally, create and consolidate social divisions rather than healing them (2000, p.262)." Treating 'social inclusion' and also 'social capital' as undoubtedly 'a Good Thing' (*Ibid.*) is high at risk to breed unexpected and unwanted outcomes.

In Japan, the first obstacle lies in that often educational policies are based on spiritualism [*seishin shugi*]. The change to the mind or awareness is regarded as the solution to the problems at school: i.e. the strategies to tackle bullying or delinquency are often abstract or rhetorical such as *kokoro no kyouiku* [fostering the mind] or *yutori* [room to grow] (Okamoto, unpublished paper; Kariya cited in Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2001, p.62). The pillar of the recent school reform policies, *ikiru chikara* and *yutori*, are 'good' in itself, and they will be the component of social relations. What is missing as a public policy is how to measure pupils' or schools' attainment of the attributes and concrete index to make them measurable. Without any means of evaluation, it cannot be determined whether policies contribute to 'a public good' or not. The spiritual phrases chosen by policy-makers can neither be defined nor measured as a public policy.

In the discourse of social capital amongst academics and policy-makers, measurement and quantifying are one of the most heated debates (e.g. Schuller *et al.*, 2000; Fine and Green, 2000; Tuijnman, 2002). What is unique to the Japanese case is that educational policies have largely been grounded in spiritualism, and the notion of measurement which are to provide accountability and question 'the value for money' of public policies has tended to be avoided. It was not until recently that the MEXT started to carry out detailed policy evaluation (MEXT, 2002g).

The second obstacle is about public participation. Both the government's emphasis on

volunteering and the expansion of volunteer groups and NPOs have been dramatic. The phenomenon is often claimed as 'civic participation' or 'the way to a civil society' (e.g. Yamagishi, 2002); NPOs are often located as 'a group which produces social capital (e.g. Takahashi, 2001, p.136)'. Moreover, the government's strategy to bring voluntary activities into the field of education and lifelong learning can be understood as 'the recurrence of the public nature [*koukyousei no kaiki*] (Satou, 2001a)'. Nevertheless, the increase in the number of such activities does not necessarily address the 'quality' (Szreter, 2000, p.57) of the activities. Borrowing Coleman's expression, 'a public good' is an important element of social capital, but there is always a possibility that public activities can be confined to 'a club good'. More harshly, Szreter argues that: "voluntary associations are as capable of damaging as of contributing to social capital (2000, p.59)". To achieve 'a club good' is one thing and to achieve 'a public good' is another. There is always a possibility that the activity of a volunteer group or a NPO can end up as self-complacency within 'the club'.

Szreter goes on to argue that:

It is the quality of the relationships that these associations engender among their members and in their relations with the wider society which is critical in determining whether or not they truly promote extensive social capital, carrying productive benefits to the whole society, as opposed to sectional advantages for the favoured few who are the members (p.58).

In Japan, however, within 'the club', its 'quality' is questionable due to the society's inexperience of democratic processes. In many cases, 'associations' and 'relations' within volunteer groups or NPOs and with other related institutions are not democratically functioning. In some cases, 'participation' is a mere slogan or a formality, has an element of compulsion or entails conflicts amongst participants due to different values and benefits (Maehira, 1999, pp.252-253). Or, people participate simply because of personal interest without any intention of public contribution and political engagement.

Also, the difficulty in building partnerships has been reported. There is an indication that local civil servants in general do not necessarily have an understanding and supportive attitude to volunteer groups and NPOs. The awareness that citizens themselves are an active group which pursue 'a public good' and that working-together as a partner to improve the community tends to be poor (Tokyo Prefecture Tama Social Education Union, 1999, p.12). Teachers as well, often hesitate to accept the local population as a partner. A survey shows that one of the biggest obstacles to developing local collaborative working is 'the difficulty in obtaining teachers' understanding and cooperation'. Another example is about the closeness of the Boards of Education [*Kyouiku Inkai*] which have had control over local educational policy-making. The Boards tend to be reluctant to link with the education administration and the local population. Often local governments criticise the closeness of the Board, and the public claim that their voice is rarely heard by the Board (Makino, 2001, pp.98-99).

There is also an issue of organisational structures. When schools, civic bodies and local administrations wish to develop partnerships, often a political hierarchy is created due to senior ruling power (Satou, 2001, p.79); or even without a ruler, under the name of 'partnerships', a hierarchical structure is established (Hirose, 2001, p.43) before comfortable working relationship develops. Or, in a group or a community where homogeneity is excessively pursued, heterogeneity tends to be excluded: i.e. non-participants are labelled as 'those who do not contribute to public goods' (Satou, 2001, p.78).

The current boom of volunteer groups and NPOs may show the increase in figures, but their 'functions' in terms of developing social capital appear to have difficulty. To make democratic participation function, the norm of Japanese organisations needs to be altered, and the awareness and incentive of individual citizens for democratic processes should become higher.

In both England and Japan, for different reasons, the current lifelong learning policies have limitations in fostering social capital. In the English case, the obstacles centre on 'social relations'; that is, the current social inclusion policies have difficulty in building 'bridging' and 'linking' social capital. New Labour is committed to social inclusion, but how the agenda is tackled is by skilling the excluded. The positive effect of individual skills – human capital – on 'bridging' and 'linking' social capital will be limited. Also, the ironic result of the over-simplified social inclusion policies has been pointed out. The policies which are meant to be to combat exclusion are in some parts, reinforcing exclusion and division.

In the case of Japan, the 'public good' aspect is the main question. Fundamentally, because of the spiritual approach to the educational policy making, measurement has not been fully discussed. Hence, evaluating the 'public good' quality without a concrete method of measuring the achievement of the education reform policies or the lifelong learning policies is not possible. The other obstacle is the high risk of 'a club good' amongst volunteer groups and NPOs. They are likely to be a generator of social capital, but because of a characteristic of the Japanese society – inexperienced democratic processes – the associations can only be producing 'personalized civiness'.

Conclusion

In both England and Japan, thus, it is not really convincing to say that the current lifelong learning policies are a powerful generator of social capital. But the argument does not challenge the research findings of e.g. the World Values Survey that 'England has low social capital' and 'Japan has high social capital'. Rather, this conclusion tries to discuss a little more about the obstacles.

In either case, the obstacle seems to be deeply embedded in the society. In England, the

two features of the lifelong learning policies, the emphasis on skills and the simplified inclusion policies which also target skilling, both derive from the government's keenness of visible measurement. Skills – human capital – can be assessed with figures, therefore attainment targets are easy to create. That leads to a question of accountability: if the target of a policy is achieved, that satisfies the accountability as a public policy; if the target is not met, the government will be questioned over its responsibility. Spending Reviews and PSAs in which clear objectives and the vast amount of targets are created show how the government perceives measurement as important. The danger which England may have is, due to its keenness of accountability, to turn policies for building social capital into visible, measurable and as a consequence, too simplified as what has happened to social inclusion policies. 'Trust, networks, norms, reciprocity, memberships or associations' are not transferable to 'skills'.

Conversely in Japan, there has been reluctance to make educational policies and lifelong learning policies measureable. The accountability of the policies has not so much been pursued, therefore spiritual aims which are not easy to measure could become a public policy. Also, the public have accepted the ambiguous and rhetorical policies without questioning their accountability as public policies. The lack of societal concern in accountability stems from the inexperience of democratic processes in Japanese society. Hence, despite the dramatic increase in the number of volunteer groups and NPOs which are seen as an innovative form of public participation, undemocratic features – hierarchy, exclusion or conflicts – are repeated. To let the seeds of social capital grow, Japanese society needs to learn democratic participation pursuing accountability.

'Social capital' and 'lifelong learning' are probably in the same family in a sense that they are both comfortable and attractive phrases but at the same time, ambiguous and unstable concepts. Having positive potentials, both terms sit with the risk of being convenient policy terms. For both England and Japan, the key will be measurement, but they have to recognise the pitfalls they are facing.

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[NOTES]

- 1) Fukuyama defines 'trust' as: "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and co-operative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of the community . . . these communities do not require extensive contractual and legal regulation of their relations because prior moral consensus gives members of the group a basis of mutual trust (1995 cited in Schuller, 2000).
- 2) According to Giddens, the key characteristics of the Third Way are: 'the radical centre, the new democratic structure (the state without enemies), active civil society, the democratic family, the new mixed economy, equality as inclusion, positive welfare, the social investment state, the cosmopolitan nation and cosmopolitan democracy' (Giddens, 1998 cited in Power and Whitty, 1999, p.542).
- 3) To develop a systematic and coherent system of vocational qualifications, the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) was set up in 1986. The Council created a framework of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) which included eleven occupational areas which were classified into five levels.
- 4) In 2001, the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (MESSC) is renamed to the Ministry of Education and Technology (MEXT).
- 5) In 1988 the Lifelong Learning Bureau was set up within the MESSC and in 1990, the Lifelong Learning Promotion Act was enacted in which the Lifelong Learning Council was established. In 2001 the Lifelong Learning Bureau was renamed to the Lifelong Learning Policy Bureau, and the Lifelong Learning Council became the Subdivision on Lifelong Learning as a part of the Central Council for Education.
- 6) *Ikiru chikara* refers to: first, having one's own opinions; second, having the ability to be able to convey one's own opinions; and third, having the ability to balance to work with others accepting differences and conflicts (MEXT, 2002h).