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Educational Shift

As we pull towards a new generation of technology and understanding we must first look at what has held us back as a society. In the last Twenty years the United States has lost its leading ranking among other countries in education, and every year the United States drops farther and farther. Many believe the issue is because the cost of college is too much but, the real reason is because our educational system is flawed and how we carry out teaching others. The united stated educational system needs a revamp, a new look at how to teach and how to truly prepare student for the harsh life ahead.

Throughout the 1980’s and into the 90’s the United States held the 3rd and 4th spot in English and science education in the globe (https://rankingamerica.wordpress.com). But as of the last 10 years in both those fields the United States has dropped ten places falling behind many countries. How is it that we could drop 10 places? This drop could be attributed to many factors. First how we teach our students, Second, Their learning environment, and third, how difficult the curriculum is. A few other countries seem to have a well-established and growing education system, one such country is Japan. Does Japan have the same three factors that affect their students as the United States does?

In the United States the classroom environment is based upon the ideals of Learning and creativity. Not being afraid to ask questions or to Question the Teacher themselves. One such practice is The idea of raising your hand, it can help the student make that gap between teacher and a personal connection, while in most situations this is helpful, it can lead to a student relying on the teacher or developing a crutch, to always be helped. It does not allow the student to truly think through an issue themselves and to deal with it. In Japan, students are not allowed to raise their hands or interrupt the teacher because it can disturb the class and derail focus. If the student still needs help after class they then ask the teacher. While this method forces the student to hold

their question and possibly confuse them if they still don’t understand and the teaching is still going on, it helps the student to process thing and truly problem solve, because if the student doesn’t solve the problem or question they have they risk further confusion. Now this is all speculation until a study in 2010 by Professor Dylan William on 200 students, in 2 tests and 2 semesters the study discovered that students who are forced to think about the answer to their question or to write it down and not to disturb the class, they noticed an increase in all test scores and behavior in class. This study was then replicated on a second semester with students and roughly the same

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J25d9aC1GZA>)

This study is almost the same as the tradition used in Japan, and South Korea, and now we see results of the change in American society. The most crucial part of the learning environment is to inhabit a place where students can learn and focus, by forcing students to focus on the questions they have, you have now subconsciously caused the students to focus and problem solve more, and thus help them have a true learning environment, not one where answers are given but questions are solved.

One of the biggest questions in the Educational field is how should students be taught, question based, all test based, or project based? This question really shows how hard it is to teach everything equally to everyone, and because of this new idea of catering to every students needs, we have forgotten the main reason we educate, to advance society, to grow those who want to learn. And sadly this does not apply to everyone, many times students are held back in their growth not from their own intelligence but because other students don’t understand the topic. And when we get into the idea that every student should learn everything we get ourselves into the mindset that if one student doesn’t understand something that we should focus all attention to them. But what we should do is leave those who do not understand behind and let them ask questions after class or to look it up themselves. But, on the other had we have “higher learning “classes or “AP classes “, but when we compare these to the curriculum of other schools and nations we notice we fall behind. Even the AP students are behind. That needs to change, if we wish to push towards a well-developed and competitive curriculum we need to start noticing how other more advanced and educated countries do it. In japan students are not only learning calculus their first year of high school but also mandated to learn a second language (mainly English). While in High school students in the United States are required 2 years of “foreign Language” they do not learn enough to truly master the language, most of the time the students learn a fraction of the language itself. In many other countries 4-6 years area mandated requirement in high-school to college of “foreign Language”. This can mostly all be attributed to the idea that all students must be taught, because we have that many students are at a standstill and don’t learn much more. We need to stop codling students and start truly preparing them for the intense rigorous environment ahead, and start understanding that a school is meant for progression of learning and progression of society, therefore we should push the boundaries, not draw new lines inside of it.

In Japan Students are taught through a system where the first eight years of your schooling is to prepare for the last eight, from kindergarten to the end of middle school you learn many things and prepare for high School which lasts three years, and then off to university for three more. During high school students are required to learn rigorous material and most of the time expected to go to a cram school during vacations. Yes, during their vacations they go to a school to prepare them for college, and the rest of high school. This is not a Japan only tradition, many other top countries do this to help further their student’s academic abilities. How does this compare to the United States?

In the United States the first eight years are the same as the Japan’s eight years, the real difference lies in how the students are taught in high school and college, The U.S uses a curriculum that an help all students whether your algebra ready or still a basic math student, when you enter high school it helps all students learn. Then as you progress through the year you are given tests that test (oh the double words) how well you do on a national average with other students all leading up to one or two big tests. The ACT or the SAT, these tests scores then determine if you are eligible to enter a college. The tests themselves don’t have too much math involved, you only need an algebra understanding to get a 6 on the math section, and it’s quite simple. Compared to Japan’s rigorous teaching and constant learning environment you start to understand the difference in the way we handle education and the way many other countries handle education. The difference is simple, at the beginning of high school American students are already 3 whole levels of math behind Japan and 2 of science. The only thing we are better at is speaking our own language. The top countries focus on teaching a difficult curriculum rather than the United States which is focused on a slow progress is why we at the same age as them are far behind. We need to restructure our teaching so we can catch up to the other countries. This really shows how far behind we are.

As we can tell America is behind, far behind. Twenty years ago we led the forefront but this day in age the simple process of learning slowly does not work, we need to push students to the limit. We need to stop hand holding and let students think their problems out and find a solution themselves rather than relying on the crutch of the teachers. Finally we need to grasp how far behind we are and learn to change how we teach, while that may restrict our creativity, we don’t go to school to learn how to be creative but how to advance society and how to advance our mind. Sadly, we need to restructure our education around many of the other nations who have it already figured out take a page from their book and build a more in-depth, diverse, and rigorous curriculum one that hardens the mind and weeds the unable from the willed. I hate to say it but we have lost to the other countries, but now we can change it all, we can become the best once again.

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