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MAKARENKO IN JAPAN – RECEPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAKARENKO'S IDEA IN A CAPITALIST SOCIETY

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In 1988 UNESCO ranked Anton Semenovich Makarenko (1888–1939) as one of the top four educators who determined the world's pedagogical thinking in the 20th century. This is not only because his idea of Collective Education was the official educational theory of the socialist countries, but also because numerous educators in non-socialist countries were inspired by his idea. According to Toshihiko FUJII (1934–2008), an educational scientist and Makarenko researcher,

Japan is one of the capitalist countries which were strongly influenced by Makarenko's ideas (Fujii 1988). Makarenko's works were first translated into Japanese after WWII. In the post-war period, Japan went through a democratization process while under the U.S. occupation. In this context, the Japanese Communist Party was legalized, the labor movement strengthened, and ideas of New Education (such as Dewey) as well as Soviet educational science were (re-)introduced. Japanese teachers who had lost trust in the previous militaristic and ultra-nationalistic education, yet were also not satisfied with the American style of education, became enthusiastic about Makarenko's pedagogy. According to Fujii, Makarenko's educational ideas offered a «third» way for teachers and were perceived as containing a good mix of discipline and child autonomy (Fujii 1988).

Publishing houses, educational organizations such as the Japan Teachers Union, as well as individual scholars and teachers, all played an important role in this reception process. The publishing house Meiji Shoten, for instance, published numerous writings of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of the Soviet Union, such as Makarenko Complete Edition (1964). According to a former editor of the Meiji Publishing, the publisher itself was not necessarily convinced of communism, but the publishing house benefited greatly because books on Soviet education sold very well and the costs of copyrights and the Russian-Japanese translation were covered by the Japanese-Soviet Society. Moreover an editor, Mitsuru Ebe, who saw himself as socialist activist, tried to change Japanese society through the publications. Ebe, together with two members of the Japanese Communist Party, founded the journal «Life Counseling (Seikatsushidō),» which was one of the most important platforms for teachers and scholars to discuss Collective Education and its implementation. For instance, scholars like Tokumitsu YAGAWA published their articles in the journal and advocated Soviet education, while criticizing US education as being incapable of solving the pedagogical problems existing in Japan. The most important actors in the reception and implementation of Makarenko's ideas were however, teachers of public elementary and secondary schools. For example, Chuji ONISHI (1930–1992) established a study group among teachers in 1954. In this study group teachers read the «Pedagogical Poem» together and tried to put Makarenko's inspirations into practice. From this group Makarenko's collective education was spread through conferences and meetings of the teachers' union. Especially in the second half of the 1950s and in the 1960s, the idea of Collective Education was well received as a means of combating poverty and chaos in post-World War II Japan.

From the late 1960s, however, Collective Education slowly lost its popularity, and criticism of it became louder. One possible reason for this could be the increased breadth of educational offerings (tutors, cram schools, etc.), which many families were now able to afford because of economic growth. The so-called Group Competition (hankyōsō) had been strongly associated with the Collective Education in Japan and was criticized severely as subordinating individuals to groups and restricting individual freedom. The daily Group Competition was introduced to schools, in order to establish an orderly daily rhythm and to teach pupils the necessity of solidarity. In the competition, students' behaviors and school duties (e.g. cleaning) were controlled. Failure to fulfill their obligation properly would cause

minus points for the group; while the best group was applauded, the worst group was criticized in the classroom. We can observe some similarities between the Japanese group competition and the pupils' activities described in the Makarenko's novel «Flags on the Battlements». Reports about hankyōsō published in the journal «Life Counseling» show us diverse outcomes for the group competitions. For instance, one junior high school teacher reported that after a group competition members of the losing groups criticized the individuals responsible for the minus points, but they did not try to collectively find a solution. On the other hand, another teacher reported that after a group competition pupils launched a kind of social project. After a group competition, pupils noticed that one student never did his homework. His group members investigated the reasons behind this and found that the student had no electricity at home. Thus the group launched a fund raising project. While they organized meetings with their parents, the district office, and an electric power company, they also sold handmade school calendars to help pay for some of the electricity.

The group competition in the first case ended in strife, but the group competition in the second example triggered students' collective action to tackle the problems of their classmates. These examples show that reading Makarenko's books and practicing so-called Collective Education is two different things. Many Japanese initiators of Collective Education were convinced of Makarenko's ideas and/or had a positive image of the Soviet Union. However, many teachers also simply adopted the method because it worked well in practice. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there had been little research on Makarenko in Japan, and the term Collective Education is not heard anymore. However, traces of it can still be seen in Japanese school practice and even among Japanese companies. Group competitions are much less observed today, but there are still many group activities to cultivate solidarity-based responsibility.

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