

# *Manabi* as an Alternative Concept of Learning in Educational Discourses

Masamichi Ueno  
Daito Bunka University

Yasunori Kashiwagi  
Chiba Keizai College

Kayo Fujii  
Yokohama National University

Taku Murayama  
Tokyo Gakugei University

This paper considers a theory and practices of Japanese *manabi* (学び) as an alternative concept of learning in the era of post-globalization. Although the term *manabi* is widely used as the translation of learning and Lernen in the field of pedagogy and in Japanese schools, it is important to understand its meaning, since the meaning of *manabi* is a comprehensive concept that differs semantically from the words learning, Lernen, and Bildung in the Western words. Faced with the globalization in the 21st century, there has been a tendency to promote educational reform and curriculum policies that could be characterized as “learnification” in which “21st century skills,” “competency-based learning,” and “learner-centered education” are emphasized. While the Western idea of learning that highlights active self is attractive to change classroom practices from the transmission of knowledge to an innovative style of active, collaborative, communicative learning, and problem-solving, Japanese education sustains traditional values that derive from *selflessness* and *nothingness* in Eastern philosophy.

*Keywords:* *manabi*, nothingness, selflessness, recognition, inclusiveness

## 1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to clarify the strengths and the limitations of Japanese education and school culture by considering a theory and practices of the Japanese word *manabi* (学び), which cannot easily be interpreted as a word that translates to *learning*, *Lernen*, and *Bildung* in the Western words.

Learning is often translated as *gakushu* (学習) and *manabi* in Japanese, and *study* is translated as *benkyo* (勉強) in Japanese. Although the term *manabi* is widely used as the translation of *learning* and Lernen in the field of pedagogy and in Japanese schools, it is important to understand its meaning, since the meaning of *manabi* is a comprehensive concept that differs semantically from the words learning, Lernen, and Bildung. In addition to the word *manabi*, the word *gakushu* also means learning. Although the meanings of *gakushu* and *manabi* overlap with the meanings of learning and Lernen, it is not enough to regard them as direct Western

---

Masamichi Ueno, Ph.D., Department of Education, Daito Bunka University, Japan; main research field: Philosophy of Education.

Yasunori Kashiwagi, M.A., Department of Child Studies, Chiba Keizai College, Japan; main research field: Philosophy of Education.

Kayo Fujii, Ph.D., Department of School Education, Yokohama National University, Japan; main research field: Philosophy of Education.

Taku Murayama, M.A., Department of Special Needs Education, Tokyo Gakugei University, Japan; main research field: Special Needs and Inclusive Education.

translations of Japanese words.

In German, the idea of *Bildung* is considered a key concept in the philosophy of education. Japanese philosophers of education often referred to the German “*Bildung*” theory, and translated the term to *toya* (陶冶) and *ningenkeisei* (人間形成). There is a fundamental understanding of the teaching of “the image of God” (*Bild Gottes*) that undergirds this concept. The *Bildung* theory also accords with the motif of “union with God.” However, the Japanese word *manabi* does not refer to the idea of “God (absolute existence).” Therefore, it is not associated with “the image of God” or with the idea of “union with God.”

It can thus be inferred that such cultural gaps in understanding have led to various issues and difficulties in introducing and applying the concept of “learning” in Japan. For instance, much attention is paid to “*manabi*-centered education” (learner-centered education) in which students learn actively, creatively, and collaboratively, and “active learning” and “competency-based learning” are prevailing pedagogical concepts in current educational practices. The concept of learning is continuously and seamlessly interpreted as *gakushu* and *manabi*. Gaps in translation are completely erased, and we tend to use the term without considering its historical and cultural contexts and implications. However, in order to understand the concept of “learning” in Japan, it is necessary to take into consideration the historical and cultural characteristics that have been applied in a practical sense and have been implemented in Japanese schools. *Manabi* was not only a word that was introduced as a translation of the Western ideas of learning and *Lernen*; it also derives from Japanese and Chinese philosophy and practice. That is, the concept of *manabi* expresses the comprehensive meaning that overlaps with learning and *Bildung*, but it cannot be reduced to the mere translation of a Western idea.

We believe that *manabi* is an exceptionally important concept that originated in Japan, and it has almost equal significance to other Japanese thoughts that have permeated throughout the Western world: “Teaism” advocated by Kakuzo Okakura in *The Book of Tea* (1906); the idea of “zen” introduced by Daisetz Suzuki in *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1940); and “Bushido” as discussed in Inazo Nitobe *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (1900). The word *Zen* derives from the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* that is frequently understood in terms of “absorption” and a “meditative state” based on ascetic practices rather than as an object of faith. The concepts of *Zen* and *Taoism* are connected with the ideas of *nothingness* and *emptiness*. Such views constitute the foundation of the concept of *manabi* in Japan.

## 2. The Concept of *Manabi*

*Gakushu* is related to the Chinese word *xuéxí* (学习). The Chinese character (学, 學) was used in ancient China by Confucius and Laozi. However, their understanding of the word is contrastive. *Analects*, a collection of Confucius and his contemporaries’ ideas, starts with the famous passages, “Confucius said, ‘To learn and to practice what is learned time and again is pleasure’ (子曰、學而時習之、不亦說乎。)” Further, “Confucius said, ‘If one learns from others but does not think, one will be bewildered. If, on the other hand, one thinks but does not learn from others, one will be in peril’ (子曰、学而不思則罔、思而不学則殆。)” (Confucius 1999). According to Confucius’ theory, the moral ideas of *Ren* (Jin, 仁) and *Xiao* (Kou, 孝), which demand benevolent love and filial piety thorough self-control, are considered important.

In contrast to Confucianism, *Taoism* presents a different view. In Chapter 20, Laozi insisted, “if you quit learning, you will no longer lose your way (絕學無憂。)” In Chapter 48, the text reads,

the more you learn, the more you get knowledge. The more you acquire “the way,” the more you lose your knowledge. Losing your knowledge again and again, you can reach the stage of “doing nothing.” You can do everything if you never

do anything unnecessary. You even can get the world if you never do anything unnecessary. If you do something unnecessary to control the world as you like, you can never get it (爲學日益、爲道日損。損之又損、以至於無爲。無爲而無不爲。取天下常以無事。及其有事、不足以取天下。). (Laozi 2016)

Thus, by neglecting to pursue *manabi* (学), we could reach the state of “doing nothing and taking things as they come (無為自然),” in order to “be ignorant and disinterested (無知無欲)” and “Tao (道).” This philosophy aims to eliminate artificial learning and to foster the pure pursuit of Tao. In this sense, Taoism is closely aligned with the idea of unlearning rather than learning.

*Manabi* was originally derived from *manebi* (真似び), which means “imitation” or “modeling.” The Chinese character 真 means “truth,” “reality,” or “authenticity” imparted by the master, while 似 is “imitation” or “similarity.” From this, we can infer that *manabi* is accomplished on the basis of *manebi*, in which students or followers imitate and practice the skills and knowledge already perfected by their masters. *Manabi* and *manebi* are closely related, linked with the practice of imitating the way a master acts or completes tasks. Imitation is the inevitable process through which followers master authentic skills, much as an infant imitates a parent. Indeed, we can see that infants acquire language by imitating what their parents or other adults say, indicating that they engage in a learning process that takes place through the imitation of the activities of other people.

The Chinese character *manabi* (学) tells another story, however, and it is important to note that the original character for 学 was 學, though the latter is rarely used now. Sato, a Japanese educational researcher, indicates that the focus of classroom lessons should change from *benkyo* (勉強), or “studying,” to learning (学び). According to Sato, the difference between *benkyo* and *manabi* depends on whether there is dialogue or not. *Manabi* should be used to describe situations where there is dialogue with objects, others, and yourself, as part of a community. In *benkyo*, however, students work on their own with little interaction.

Sato also explains that the character 學 was inspirational: the upper part (爻) meant children’s (learners’) dialogue with ancestors in the areas of academies, art, and culture, while the lower part (爻) represented dialogue with others. This means that *manabi* is accomplished by involvement in the academies, art, and culture, spheres traditionally cultivated by the ancestors, while dialogue involves other people, including friends and classmates. The “E” and “ヨ” in the character 學 represent the adult hands that guide a child’s learning activities—the teachers and adults that foster a student’s learning processes and practices in the community—while at the center of the *manabi* practice is the character 子, “a child” (Sato 2000). *Manabi*, therefore, focuses on the role of community in educational practices, with the child positioned at the center.

In recent educational practices and with regards to curriculum reform of Japan, there has been a tendency to highlight “active learning,” “competency-based learning,” and “learner-centered education.” While the Western idea of learning has a huge influence on educational practices and curricula, Ren (Jin), Xiao (Kou) nothingness (no mind, none, 無心) informs the background of educational practice. For example, moral education that is concerned with benevolent love and filial piety prevails in the classroom. Furthermore, studying and club activities in which students practice innocently in nothingness and imitating the model is highly respected. In this sense, the traditional concept of *manabi* is mediated not only by language, reason, logos, and consciousness, but also by nothingness, emptiness and silencing.

Additionally, instead of insisting on communicating their own thoughts and opinions, students tend to act in similar ways as their peers. In Japanese, this behavior is called *minna* (みんな), which means all or everyone.

Teachers often use the word to refer to inclusiveness, and this does not align with Western interpretations of individuals and subjects. Although “*minna*” should be applied to everyone in the classroom and refers to inclusiveness in learning communities, individual subjects based on language, reason, and consciousness do not mediate its relevance to *manabi*. In lessons that do not refer to the image of God and transcendental existence, as seen in the German *Bildung*, the practice of *manabi* in Japan has not only incited various problems when introducing the thought of learning and *Bildung*, but has also expressed a peculiar characteristic that cannot be adequately expressed in its English and German translation.

### **3. *Manabi*: Philosophical Reflection of Japanese Learning**

In Japan, the question often arises regarding whether or not we have the art of subjectivity. The question refers to the basic definition of subjectivity, while the other concerns a philosophical question about subjectivity. The first asks the question: Can we talk about ourselves in terms of our subjectivity? The other concerns the philosophical question: Can we establish the kind of subjectivity that accords with the meaning of subjectivity in the Christian West? The subject is a product of the Western tradition. In both meanings, the Japanese have seemed to be worried or upset about this question since the period of modernization that occurred during the Meiji restoration.

In the same way, there is a discussion in Japanese pedagogy on how Japanese learn. In this question, there are also two constitutive aspects. One asks “how do we learn about ourselves?” This question refers to the explicit aspect of learning. Another question concerns whether we can understand the meaning of learning as it is defined in Western countries. This question contains an implicit meaning. As a matter of fact, it is difficult for Japanese to translate “learning” in Japanese.

In the process of Japanese modernization and industrialization, we learned about Western sciences (as compared to the Occidental tradition). As a result, Japan has grown significantly since 1867. In terms of the capitalistic profit, one can say that Japanese people have learned as much about Western sciences as Westerners have. We formed (organized) our curriculum by ourselves based on the Western scientific system. Then, we learned those sciences in modern Western schools. On the other hand, we have our own style of learning, and therefore, our own interpretation and meaning of subject.

#### *3.1. Silencing and Manabi*

Reading, writing, listening, and speaking are the main elements of learning. However, in *manabi*, we learn silence, or *silencing*, as well as the four elements. Silencing does not refer to the silence of human beings, but to the attitudes of schoolchildren. The ability to say nothing is an important element of *manabi*. Actually, all Japanese children learn this element tacitly (tacit knowledge), so to speak. Above all, students are implicitly taught to say nothing (silencing), and to write nothing (unwriting), despite having private thoughts and things they wish to say. Japanese children neither speak nor write to communicate their opinions in public schools. This is an aspect of the art of Japanese learning.

This issue relates to the problem of the self-formation (development) of the subject. The western subject is one who has an ability to speak clearly about what he wants: namely, he is a being who has logos. Needless to say, speaking, writing, reading, and listening are learned in Japan because of the strong influence of Western pedagogy. Nevertheless, we learn silencing in the process of *manabi*. This does not mean that we speak privately about teaching. Silencing belongs to our old tradition that existed before the modernization in Meiji.

Kaibara Ekken, a Japanese Neo-Confucianist philosopher and educator in the pre-modern era, wrote a book titled *Yojo-kun* (The Book of Life-nourishing Principles) in 1713. In this, he wrote, “Tranquilize your heart. Quiet your mind. Cease speaking and be calm. This is a way to obtain virtue and take care yourself. This is the one and only way. If you speak so much, your mind will be turbulent, angry, and you will lose your virtue and damage yourself. This is the only harm” (Kaibara 1961, 49). In this way, speaking excessively is thought to be harmful in Japanese tradition. As we all know, Kaibara acknowledges that reading and writing are important elements for learning. However, he thinks that silencing should be one’s primary aim. In Western language, proverbs such as “Speech is silver, Silence is golden” or “Speech is of Time, Silence is of Eternity” contrast speech and silence. However, in Japan, we never compare silence (or silencing) with other values, such as speech or speaking. Silencing is not a mere value, but is the only absolute virtue (徳) in Japanese philosophy. This is why we make tea or drink tea silently in *sado* (Japanese tea ceremony) (Okakura 1906-1991).

### 3.2. *The Nothingness( 無 ) as Selflessness*

According to Western pedagogy, learning aims to cultivate the formation of the individual subject like a *Bildung* in German. Western learning is, so to speak, a process of self-awareness. The most important aspect of learning is to know one’s self. In terms of Western thought, the development of the self is strongly related to the process of learning. For example, English sentences must include the subject “I,” “you,” “he,” “she,” or “it.” Furthermore, if one learns another Western language, it is important to note the location of inflection in German words and expressions, such as in “ichhabe,” “du hast,” “er hat,” “wirhaben,” “ihrhabt,” or “siehaben” (“Siehaben”). In this way, one must always be conscious of the subject. However, in many cases, the subject is omitted in Japanese (the omission of subjects that would normally be included in English). There is also no inflection related to the subject. Unlike English or other Western languages, we are never conscious of the subject. Based on our grammar, the sentence “I am not myself, therefore I am” seems to be one consequence of the Japanese absolutely paradoxical identity theory (\* A is not A, also A is).

Similarly, selflessness becomes stronger through the “nothingness of my-self” in *manabi*. It is unnecessary for children to have the ability to verbally articulate what they think or feel in the classroom. On the contrary, students must quickly assess the atmosphere and evaluate their peer’s behaviors. We call such a context “*kuuki* (空気).” The inability to *kuuki* correctly tends not to be an issue in Japan.

“I” formed by *manabi* is the existence of one who is not “me,” and is not the individual who can speak subjectively. We call such a trans-subjective self a selfless self, or “the well-educated person.” The expression of one’s own opinion is not praised in Japan, although it is praised in the West. We have many words to describe this. For example, “*sokutenkyoshi* (selfless devotion to justice; 則天去私)” which was introduced by Natsume Soseki, “*messhihoukou* (selfless devotion; 滅私奉公),” “*tat tvamasi* (Identifying Brahman with Atman; 梵我一如).” It should not to come as a surprise that those ideas remain part of our unconscious education.

*Shugyo* (修行) indicates the typical prototype of *manabi*. *Shugyo* can be interpreted to mean spiritual exercise (Kishimoto 1961). From antiquity to the present, *shugyo* is a representative learning method of *manabi*. It seems to have lost the original spiritual meaning, but *shugyo* is highly praised and means the art of living in Japan. In educational practice, teachers use this word in order to explain the style of *manabi* to students. For example, teachers may say, “This is not study but *shugyo*! Throw away yourself (Get over yourself)! Be selfless!” The essence of *shugyo* is extended beyond the Japanese border. Today, the idea of mindfulness is becoming popular all over the world, and is associated with the ideas of Meditation or *Zazen* (座禅). This is

also an aspect of shugyo. Moreover, Shugendō (修験道) describes the traditional practice based on Japanese mountain asceticism-shamanism, which incorporate Shinto and Buddhist concepts. This practice is used to describe the most unmerciful training for *yamabushi* (山伏). Shugyo used to be understood as religious training or ritual. However, the meaning of this concept has expanded to apply to the context of culture, art, sport, and education. In those cases, we use the Chinese character “修業” instead of “修行:” this (修行) means “to go to somewhere (for example, to climb a mountain, etc.) in order to attain religious aims,” and that (修業) means “to develop our skills or our technic in apprenticeship or training.” The final aim of shugyo is *Satori* (悟り) which means selfless awareness. We may also refer to this as “Sokusin-Jōbutsu (即身成仏),” which means self-mummification. In any case, the term refers to a matter of selflessness, in which we perceive of the nothingness of ourselves.

As a result of this reflection, it is evident that *manabi* refers to a different sort of learning than that which is understood in the West.

#### 4. Recognition and Learning: Children at Japanese School

Here, it is important to consider the recognition of education in Japanese schools from the perspective of the cultural gap. Recognition is a concept that has been introduced by German social philosopher Axel Honneth in recent years. Many translations of Honneth have also been published in Japan. Translators sometimes play the role of sociological researcher and philosopher, but recognition is also an important concept for pedagogy. According to Honneth, three dimensions constitute recognition, each of which is related to different objects (Honneth 1994). The recognition theory is a very Western concept, and Honneth is known for being a Western thinker. I emphasize approaching recognition from the perspective of a cultural gap rather than describing the theoretical problem inherent to Honneth’s theory. From a cultural perspective, recognition refers to selflessness and nonlinguistic learning.

##### 4.1. Nonlinguistic Learning: Word of Magic as “Minna (Everyone)”

People who visit Japanese schools have heard the questions, “How does everyone (as Japanese Minna) think?” “Is it transmitted to everyone (minna)?” “What is goal of all (minna)?” These are often questions articulated by a teacher, but they are examples of the sorts of questions that children ask. The word as “minna” (everyone, all) has a particular meaning in Japanese schools.

Minna usually indicates all of one’s classmates. Therefore, when a teacher asks a child, “Is everyone ready?” children tend to look around restlessly or stare at each other in the neighborhood and confirm the next thing. Whether only I am not doing to be different, whether you’re preparing similarly (One is going to fail to prepare.)? When a child finds a different point, the child corrects that and arranges preparations right. In other words, a different child imitates the form of the other children. As a result, everyone in the class must be able to confirm that they are ready to move on. Thus, minna promotes imitation (*manabi*, learning) among the children in Japanese schools.

The classmate’s behavior, in which one imitates something, cannot sufficiently be explained in words. Certain behaviors can only be acquired by imitating another’s behavior. This learning (*manabi*) was the predominant educational feature during the Edo Period and constitutes the core of Japanese learning. According to Tsujimoto, learning during the Edo Period was formed through “imitation and acquisition.” He refers to Japanese education as “the soaking style” (imitation and acquisition), and describes it as “the education which

isn't told" (Tsujimoto 2012). This means that a teacher presents a model to a student by no word. Learning with one's body is a basic component of Japanese education. A teacher advises children to think independently of the model, but he or she does not communicate this verbally.

The type of educational system that considers minna in a Japanese class is maintained by today's Japanese school system. According to Tsuneyoshi, Japanese schools are founded on the idea of internalizing to siding with minna. First, teachers conduct their lessons with the "cooperative aim," for example: "Everyone will be a close friend," is taught in class. Next, a significant amount of group activities are performed. For instance, "small-group activity" refers to "the mechanism in which contact between children is close," and "the knowledge for each other is accumulated through the common experience," "Even if it isn't mediated by words spoken to each other, communication in empathetic terms constitutes the foundation" (Tsuneyoshi 1992, 48). In an activity conducted in a small group (for example, school lunch, health, musical section, blackboard section), children learn the role and behavior of the participant, in short, "the type" (型) in Japanese schools.

Minna indicates the role of the student that is concerned with activity. For example, when a child says "minna knew," this means that a lot of students knew. In this case, few children "did not know." Children who claim, "I don't know" remain silent. They behave as if they are part of the collective. Therefore, according to Sato, "everyone" essentially denotes an individual relation, but minna in the classroom has will and consciousness," and "from the beginning, others don't exist in school in the Japanese system" (Sato 2012, 61). "Minna" seems to be life what isn't seen.

Others are not in the classroom; in other words, the self is also not in that. A teacher calls himself "teacher" in a Japanese school. This gives priority to the role in the group and is the phenomenon that becomes the ambiguous Self. Properly speaking, imitation concentrates on imitating a model more than on expressing an idea. Therefore, the self cannot help but be ambiguous. Japanese class is not formed out of a relation between one's self and others, but is formed by the ambiguous self who influences the minna. Therefore, when a teacher says, "I'd like to hear everyone's idea," the child assumes that the teacher would like to know the class's idea, not an individual's idea. Thus, in their discussions, an individual says, "I think" based on the ideas of his or her other classmates, rather than verbalizing his or her own personal idea. These statements do not reflect the expression of a simple idea of "I;" rather, these give priority to form the "idea of a class." Though the object of minna is not clear, children in a class consider minna in their responses.

Clearly, such statements differ from communication in a global society. Therefore, after 2000, as a result of the PISA investigation, emphasis on language activity has been advanced in Japanese schools. As a result, in several Japanese classrooms, rules of discussion have been considered. In the classroom, teachers have been encouraged to tell their students, "You may speak about your idea." Children experience a dilemma because they continue to be asked to, "express your idea" in the classroom, though they are already present in the classroom as an ambiguous self. Thus, there is a cultural gap with regards to whether the "self or I" should be included in expressing an idea.

#### 4.2. *Communication and Recognition*

Communication based on empathy is the focus of Japanese schools. Words are used to express one's own idea—even if such an idea is contingent on others' ideas—and are not meant to be used to express one's desire will. "My idea" is "my idea including minna." In the classroom, a statement that is premised on one's empathy for others is the main, communication method that connects the language with a sensitivity to others is

promoted and the ambiguous self is being able to “read between the lines.”

This communication style is forcing Japan to accelerate children’s current recognition problems. According to Doi, communication among Japanese children and young people is formed through “characterization” and “easy relation” (Doi 2009). Children asked for recognition and their places in their peer group which can read between the lines and are asked to have delicate high communication ability in liquid society, more than children are encouraged to articulate their idea and build relationships with others. Children ask recognition from close man by the values and guarantees of the model, as well as common characteristics of postmodern society, and one requests to become “by oneself, the man who has value” in the relation. Children do not believe in the values of a group, and are the one by which “minna believes that” because it’s believed, and anyway, they attempt to believe it and to obtain recognition. One will be “the man who has value through the recognition” (Yamatake 2011, 35).

Delicate communication ability has been produced according to the loose standard of recognition. Its ability has been formed to consider minna. Imitated objects are “close man,” “peer group,” and “everyone.” In other words, recognition in a “peer group” joins by imitating so that it can be believed in the same way, not because the value of a group is important. The fluidity of a standard of the recognition and ambiguousness of the self in a relation are two sides of the same coin.

This is the problem of recognition when it comes to fostering a close relation and a public relation. In other words, the children encounter the problem of being approved by his or her peer group (learning group) on the way to growth. Because Japanese learning is concerned with “ambiguous self,” “minna,” “delicate communication ability,” and “imitation,” it is difficult to explain this by Western Theory (Honneth’s recognition theory) and Bildung. That is to say, Japanese learning and recognition is not a model that individual clashes with a society and formed self though the model.

## 5. Inclusiveness in/of Learning

In this section, a case of a special and inclusive practice will be analyzed. While it is worth noting the exclusive trends in education, it is inclusive education that is promoted in Japanese schools, as well as in other countries, and the concept of *manabi* refers to inclusive learning.

Now, a case in a separate special education school for the mildly intellectual disabled near Tokyo will be submitted in order to explore the dimensions of *manabi*. This separate special school has some unique features, since it is inside the regular high school. The case refers to a situation dealing with *manabi* in Sagyo-Gakushu (Work Study Program) classes. In preparation with the educational aims of the special school, plural product lines were prepared, and each student was assigned to each line with respect to their aptitudes, competencies, and skills.

In the case of the work-study group on paperwork, each working unit was created that focused on recovery, gradation, disposition, cutting, and stowage of paper for recycling, and so on. This is not the special work of this school, but constitutes an ordinary work-study program for the intellectually disabled. Upon obtaining the understanding and cooperation from the company neighborhood, their paperwork was outsourced. They experienced how to conduct the delivery of materials in a systematical, organizational, and practical condition. From the viewpoint of the group work, each student has selected his or her working unit using his or her own will and the teachers’ advice, which made it possible for them to participate as a member of the practical learning community. In Japan, we also have a graded school system according to one’s biological age,



including special needs and inclusive education. The abilities, skills, knowledge, and techniques vary greatly among the individuals, even those within the same learning unit, despite the presence or absence of disabilities or the discrepancy between the severity of the students' disabilities and their medical conditions. Thus, there are some differences in the work, in which each student makes it possible with respect to the efficiency of working, the degree of skilled motor activities, and the working tasks with less help (e.g., whether they can use the paper cutting machine or not) by their friends and teachers.

Compared to the Western learning theory of group work, such as the situated learning theory, the transition to another work task upon mastering a current task may be discussed, but in this case, the transition between tasks is not emphasized. Rather, most students repeat the same task for months, even after they have mastered the task. The teachers prepare the working and learning process that leads from the process to the execution of a task and properly allocate their students to each stage in the work process. Why do they not transition? Their work focuses not only on the mastery and practice of a skill, but also on the formation of human relationships between colleagues, giving thought to how people around them would feel and act (慮る), so that students can experience an achievement within a communal setting.

We notice two main features of *manabi* in this context. The first is the continuity and discontinuity of time. In many *manabi* settings, the continuity of time is not highly considered, which is reflective of Japanese culture and the discontinuity of time. The students re-do their work many times, even if they master their task, because they meet the here-and-now task on that time, resolving their previous works. Kerschensteiner's Arbeitsschule, for example, which was introduced in Japan in the early twentieth century, was considered to be the practical theory of the role of work as a central subject matter for all students, and emphasized not the labor of work, but the creation and production of their self-activated works, such as plowing the field, bearing the animals, and making the violin. We can track a series of work of these types of learning. For students in *manabi* settings, however, it is hard to adapt to the continuity of time, which is an aspect of Western culture. According to Numata, the Japanese traditionally deal with time concretely, in a touchy-feely and intuitive manner, and do not rely upon the abstract organization of time, which is in accordance with Western culture rationally in transcendent viewpoints like the western style (Numata 2002). Kato suggests that one of the concepts of time in Japanese culture is the circulated time with the clear segment (Kato 2007). *Manabi* and the Japanese sense of time are both concerned with the concentration on now and the present time.

The second factor is the communality of the working groups. The carefully situated allocation of students, the arrangement of tasks, and the selection and separation of stages constitute an environment in which students are members of a *manabi* community. The intention of this set up was that all students would have a unique role in the community and be able to display their abilities. The establishment of this environment is based on the theory of full participation. In these scenes, the students are absorbed in their work and extend beyond the self (無我の境), so the value of their communal work is more greatly emphasized than the individual's personal work or education.

## Works Cited

- Confucius. *Rongo*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. 1999.  
 Doi, T. *Kyarakasuru/sareru Kodomotati*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2009.  
 Honneth, A. *Kampf um Anerkennug*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1994.

- Kaibara, E. *Yojo-kun*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961.  
Kato, S. *Nihon Bunka niokeru Jikan to Kukan*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007.  
Kishimoto, H. *Shukyogaku*. Tokyo: Daimeido, 1961.  
Laozi. *Laozi*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2016.  
Numata, H. *Kyoiku no Joken*. Sendai: Tohoku University Press, 2002.  
Sato, M. *Manabikara Tousousuru Kodomotachi*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000.  
---. *Gattkoukaikaku no Tetugaku*. Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 2012.  
Suzuki, D. T. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2005.  
Tsujiimoto, M. *Manabi no Huuken*. Tokyo: Kodansha Gakujutsu Bunko, 2012.  
Tsuneyoshi, R. *Ninngemkeisei no Nichibei hikaku*. Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 1992.  
Yamatake, S. *Mitomeraretai no Syoutai*. Tokyo: Kodansha Shinsho, 2011.