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redefining school education and the public sphere in the age of globalization

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Globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the 21st century have contributed to transforming education and the public sphere defined by the nation state into a transnational dimension of the public sphere that transcends national boundaries. The public sphere of education does not refer to a fixed and pre-determined sphere, but rather to what is generated through the interactive and dialogical relationships among students, teachers, parents, and citizens. It is important to revitalize schools as democratic communities based on the idea of democracy as a way of life as opposed to school policies dominated by the neoliberalism of competition and choice and education standardization. In this essay, I offer seven perspectives on reclaiming teaching and learning and reimagining school education and the public sphere in local, national, and global dimensions.

Keywords: community, democracy, education, public sphere, school policy

Rapid globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the 21st century have contributed to transforming education and the public sphere defined by the nation state into a transnational dimension of the public sphere that transcends national boundaries. In particular, the consolidation of nation-states since the 19th century, the rise of capitalism and industrial society, urbanization, technological innovation, and bureaucratic centralization have facilitated the development of education and the public sphere. In contrast, the expansion of the global world has triggered an innovative restructuring of teaching, learning, and schools. Current educational issues are also significantly different from the situations and assumptions that educational theory and school policy have faced in the past.

Since the 1990s, the debate on educational reforms and the public sphere in Western and Asian countries has been dominated by neoliberal policies that privatize and marketize schools. This trend has encouraged free competition in education in place of the welfare state and welfare society that aim to equalize education and correct social gaps and inequalities. The movement to govern the public sphere with neoliberal principles has been further developed in the 2020s. It is restructuring the public sphere in ways that overemphasize self-responsibility and minimize public responsibility for education. At the same time, there is a growing movement to restructure schools by reexamining the principles and policy of education and the democratic public sphere.

For example, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, utilizing new technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, big data, and robotics, is driving a fundamental transformation in the way people work and learn. The Covid-19 pandemic restricted people's mobility and social interaction, and had a profound impact on public safety and security. Additionally, the world is

faced with issues such as deepening social intolerance and division, widening inequality and poverty, the spread of populism and authoritarianism, and the escalation of international conflicts and regional confrontations. The debate on democracy and the public sphere is undergoing a reexamination of its significance in the face of authoritarian social configurations and the spread of populism.

In my previous works (Ueno, 2013; 2016), I have discussed the need to reconstruct education and the public sphere in a highly specialized, diversified, and complex society. In particular, I have been engaged in research that develops John Dewey's philosophy of education and the democratic public sphere in the contemporary era. From Dewey's perspective (Dewey, 1899/1980; 1902a/1976; 1902b/2008a; 1910/1985; 1916/2008b; 1927/1988), there has been a growing momentum to generate democratic education based on students' learning and thinking experiences as well as interactive and dialogical communication. For example, in the last two decades of school reform and curriculum revision in Japan and other East Asian countries educational innovation is moving beyond the acquisition of basic and fundamental knowledge toward the formation of cosmopolitan citizenship, including inquiry-based thinking, creative thinking, critical thinking, social participation, and communication.

Particularly in classroom teaching in Japan and East Asia, there has been a shift from a style devoted to the transmission and acquisition of definitive knowledge to inquiry-based, cooperative, and expressive learning, with an emphasis on the quality, design, and communication of information-processing knowledge instead of competing for quantity, efficiency, and speed. Meanwhile, there is a push to make individual curriculum integrated, relational, and cross-curricular, rather than fragmented into subject areas, while classrooms are being encouraged to remain open to families, communities, institutions, businesses, and professional organizations, as opposed to being isolated from local communities and society. Education in the age of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution has prompted a restructuring of the modern school system, driving innovations that create a new educational and public sphere.

It is true that the restructuring of education and the public sphere cannot be attributed solely to a series of global world expansions. It is misleading to believe that a global perspective on education will lead to the decline or disappearance of local regional activities and national spheres. Globalization simultaneously includes the restructuring of local practices and national states. The national sphere is limited and narrow in scope to solve today's increasingly complex and transnational political, economic, informational, environmental, energy, technological, medical, poverty, terrorism, and conflict issues, but broad in scope to address regional and family issues.

The perspective on schooling and the public sphere calls for the restructuring of the territorial state framework, dialogue, debate, border crossing, and mutual recognition of differences, while promoting learning and community practices that are rooted in regional cultures, families, and communities, establishing decentralized regional sovereignty, creating distinctive schools, and enhancing collaboration between schools and communities.

It calls for a home environment where people connect, support, and care for one another. Children's educational environments have changed with a shrinking labor market, widening economic disparities, and increasing number of divorced and impoverished families, leading to a loss of meaning and cynicism toward learning. During this period, problems such as bullying, truancy, classroom disorder, juvenile delinquency, and violence have been identified in schools. In addition,

there have been serious changes in children's family environments, as the modern family moves toward disintegration (Kashiwagi et al., 2011; Ueno, 2013; 2021).

The family is essentially a place where basic attachment, affection, and proximity are nurtured, but today such an intimate space is not always guaranteed. Family members may suffer from mental illness, domestic violence, depression, adjustment issues, and panic disorder. What is needed is a school where children connect and bond with others by caring for each other. The issues surrounding education and the public sphere should be reconstructed at the local, national, and global levels.

Here, based on my research about Dewey's and other theories of education (Ueno, 2013; 2016; 2021), I offer seven perspectives on reclaiming teaching and learning and reimagining schooling and the public sphere in the age of globalization. The creation of a public sphere in education is deeply connected to the question of how to redefine democratic learning, teaching, curriculum, and community so that students, teachers, parents, and citizens can live together in democratic societies.

The first is to support advanced learning in the classroom, emphasize children's civil liberties, rights, equality, and justice. It is imperative to ensure children's participation in quality classroom learning and to invite them to advanced and authentic learning. It entails encouraging the transformation of education and the public sphere toward the creation of a society in which diverse people support, share, communicate, and live in harmony with each other (Dewey, 1916/2008b; 1927/1988).

The second is the active introduction of interactive teaching, incorporating cooperative activities and learning rooted in inquiry. In school classrooms based on Dewey's theories (Dewey, 1899/1980; 1902b/2008a; 1916/2008b), the emphasis should be on developing lessons centered on interactive and interactional learning activities instead of traditional lessons that efficiently transfer determined knowledge and skills, and promote cooperative and socially-practical learning activities.

Third, a relationship of care should be fostered within the classroom and the school considered as home. The school is a space where students learn, support, and nurture each other by meeting and interacting with teachers and children. It is a space composed of reciprocal and responsive relationships, caring for one another. Noddings (1992; 1999) attempted to reconstruct education by connecting caring with concepts of justice, equity, equality, and democracy. The question of education and the public sphere directs an overlapping phase with the guarantee of the intimate sphere.

Fourth, the subject matter that constitutes learning activities needs to be organized in a correlative, relational, and cross-disciplinary manner, beyond an understanding based on small, fragmented unit or subject areas. Dewey (1899/1980; 1902b/2008a) interpreted curriculum as a relational concept rather than a disciplinary concept. The curriculum should be connected and continuous with children's learning experiences, rather than being completely disconnected from subject and unit areas.

Fifth, teacher collegiality and schools built on cooperative communities should be encouraged. Building teacher collegiality means building a community of teachers as professionals. Above all, teachers should be proficient and open their own classrooms and reflect on their own practice. This means building relationships within schools where teachers learn from and support each other, establishing a community of professionals supported by cooperation, and collegiality.

Sixth, it is recommended that classroom environments be connected to and widely open to social spaces such as the home, community, institutions, and businesses. Specifically, children, teachers, parents, and the community should share a vision of the school as a community where they can learn and grow together. Dewey (1899/1980; 1902a/1976) emphasized the interaction between school and society and sought to create schools as social centers. A school is a space where children, teachers, parents, local residents, and many other people meet and connect with each other.

Seventh, it is necessary to promote schools as democratic communities centered on the participation of such diverse people in learning. Strike (2010, pp. 135–137) criticizes the "standard paradigm" and the market-based "choice paradigm" that dominate education today, and defends the "community paradigm" that encompasses the "4Cs" of Coherence, Cohesion, Care, and Connection. Schools as democratic communities should be places where children from diverse backgrounds can interact and live together to form a better society.

Thus, the public sphere of education does not refer to a fixed and pre-determined sphere, but rather to what is generated through the interactive and dialogical relationships among students, teachers, parents, and citizens. As Dewey (1916/2008b) stated, it is important to revitalize schools as democratic communities based on the idea of democracy as a way of life. This is to offer a vision that rethinks the public sphere of democratic education as opposed to school policies dominated by the neoliberalism of choice paradigm and educational standardization. In the wake of various technological and social innovations, the question as to how to envision future education that moves toward the realization of our hopes and happiness, and builds a better society and world has become an indispensable issue for creating the public sphere in local, national, and global dimensions.

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