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### Reviving A Decayed System

The United States has grown to become economically the largest country in the world. But according to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 results, “The United States ranked 19th in science, 20th in readings and 31st in mathematics out of 35 OECD countries” (OECD, 18). With a superior economic status, the United States should be able to provide its citizens and students with the best education; instead, according to the data, the United States falls extremely short behind many high educationally performing countries. To combat this lack in proficiency, America must break past its stagnant state and look at the education systems of top-achieving countries: Finland, Japan, and Estonia. In Finland, teachers are trained to perform excellence to accommodate for all of the students’ needs. Additionally, Japan focuses on student’s moral and character development. And lastly, Estonia emphasizes on enforcing a well-designed equity system for their students.

In order to promote the career of teaching, America should adopt the same comprehensive educator training system as Finland. In the United States, the career interest in teaching has diminished over time. On the other hand, Finnish citizens hold a high respect to the schooling occupations. To have a strong education system, there must be educators that are trained to a level of outstanding expertise, nothing below. Schools that possess highly competent teachers will be able to produce more favorable results in educating their students and overall create a better scholastic environment. According to Malinen, Vaisanen, and Savolainen, “ This

approach exists also in Finnish teacher education where class teachers not only take theoretical courses and practise teaching of all subjects, but also have many skills courses in arts, music and sports” (577). This quote highlights how Finnish teachers are not hardwired to only focus on literacy and numeracy. Instead, many instructors are taught to look at education in a broader vision. This facilitates the growth of each child not only academically, but also ways that are imaginative and artistic. Allowing each student to develop their unique skill set without any limitations is what brings such success in the educational system of Finland. A school is a place of growth and development where all students should have equally trained and outstanding teachers. Whereas Finland offers strategic ideas in improving education through teachers, other countries such as Japan will be able to help America with its emphasis on ethics in school.

One beneficial aspect that Japan incorporates into their education system is the focus on the student's moral and character development. In order to prepare the students for society beyond campus grounds, schools must instill good habits as well as an ethical fashion of living on top of the academic studies. In America, many of the students are so fixated on academics that they miss out on developing crucial life morals and ethics. Ordinary practices such as the sanitation of their campus, teamwork with peers, and responsibility of their own actions are overlooked in the American education system. In Craig C. Wieczorek's *Comparative Analysis of Educational Systems of American and Japanese Schools: Views and Visions*, he pinpoints, “Students are responsible for the cleanliness of the school and the grounds after classes have concluded” (106). This very particular yet important aspect in Japanese classrooms is what lacks in American education. In other words, the quote highlights how students are in charge of their campuses cleanliness creating a higher sense of responsibility for their own actions when on school grounds. Also Wieczorek explains, “Students stay in the same homeroom throughout the

academic year, a practice that fosters teamwork and pride in their school” (106). By sticking to one homeroom throughout a school year, students are given the opportunity to create stronger bonds with each other and master a higher sense of social skills that will be valuable when stepping into the real world after graduating secondary or post-secondary education. Also, explained by Yasuhiro Nemoto, the author of the book *The Japanese Education System* states, “Moral education aims to prevent problem behavior such as bullying, truancy, and school violence, and to encourage in children a respect for human life” (23). With the various benefits that come from applying ethical teachings in mind, there should be no reason for America to still lack such a key aspect. Therefore, in order to better prepare students for their future in society and develop ethical human beings for the future, the United States should follow the same focus in moral education and character development as Japan. On top of Japan’s self-improvement strategies, Estonia’s strong equity system can be used as a prime example for America to emulate.

To ensure equity in education, America must examine Estonia’s successful and effective system for impartiality. In schooling, equity is defined as providing high-quality education for all students in all schools no matter what ethnic, social, or economic backgrounds they come from. By guaranteeing equal opportunities all across the board, the number of students that struggle or fall behind will decrease, and those who are less privileged will receive the same education as a student who comes from a privileged background. Although America has been improving its equity, it is still lagging behind Estonia. According to PISA statistical results, many students in America are not meeting the baseline proficiency in reading, science, and math (OECD, 18). In contrast, while holding significant cultural diversity, Estonia is, “strong at ensuring all schools offer very similar education opportunities. No matter which school students attend, they will

receive a quality education” (OECD, 45). By means of providing this amount of equality to their students, Estonia was able to have a large number of disadvantaged students perform as well as the top students in the country. This illustrates how equity plays a large roll in the quality of education a country administers. For this reason, there is no doubt that America must learn from Estonia in order to instill higher equity and improve its schooling system.

To conclude, the current education system in the United States lacks in many aspects that other countries prosper in. To to become a country with a solid system, it must embody the ideas and strategies that make other countries so successful in education. In Finland, teachers are well respected and instructed to provide their students with the highest quality of education. In Japan, schools emphasize teamwork and responsibility in order to foster moral development and self-improvement for the real world. Lastly, Estonia has implemented equity throughout their education system with the purpose of ensuring excellent education for all students. With all of these countries and their high achieving characteristics in mind, America must strive to raise their rigor of education in an increasingly competitive world.

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