

The Balance of Life

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“Japanese are too busy! I don’t want to work at Japanese company.”

These are the words that I heard from one of the ALT teachers. Nowadays, Japan has a lot of problems such as childcare, gender gap, declining birthrate, and the aging population. I think these have something in common: losing oneself in busyness.

In my opinion, many Japanese are swamped with work and study: this is the biggest problem in Japan. I have two points why we get so busy. First, Japanese work too much. As the ALT teacher said, I think there are tons of people who have a negative image of Japanese work culture. I think Japanese work hard because the birthrate is declining and the average age is increasing. Because of this, the number of the people who can work is decreasing. The retirement age is becoming higher and higher. It is said that my generation can retire when we become seventy-five. We can expect that Japanese business will be serious if we do not change because the people who can work is decreasing and I expect that my generation have to work longer than now. Gender gap is another reason. For instance, I expect that woman have a lot of pressure to work and not have a child because the maternity leave is not fully supported in Japan. This is one cause of the birthrate declining problem. I also expect that raising child while working is a horrible task and this will make people busy. Second, people study too hard. Having many things to search and study, it is hard for students to find the purpose. For example, I had a Japanese kanji test on Monday, an English vocabulary test on Wednesday, and a biology test on Thursday last week. We, students, can understand that these tests are for ourselves. However, if we have ton of things to do in a short time, we will panic and cannot focus on other things, such as house care and catching up on the news of the day. Connecting with this, if we have many things to study, we will lose the purpose: Why are we studying? This will cause a lot of problems for us, and as a result, we won’t be able to concentrate in class. Because of this, students will be very busy before submitting homework.

Why being busy is a problem? I think there are two effects on our

lives. First, we only think about the problems related by ourselves. For instance, Japan's SDGs achievement is lower than other developed countries. I think this is because it is hard for us to think about others' problems such as environment problems because we don't have any emotional attachment. Second, childcare will be difficult. The time we spend with our own children will gradually decrease when we are busy. If the time that the children spend alone is too long, they will be lonely. Worst case scenario, the child might have attachment disorder and it will be difficult for them to take care their own children.

To solve these problems, I have two ways to reduce Japanese busyness. First, learn from other countries. I think we should learn how to work more efficiently and comfortably. Even if we have cultural differences, there are some things that we can do to change. For example, we can share our job together. This is the way that the Netherlands does it. According to OECD, time worked on average for a year in Japan is 1745 hours whereas the Netherlands is 1384 hours. In my opinion, if we try these unique ideas from the countries where it is comfortable for working, we can reduce our busyness. Second, we have to think and act positively. For instance, I have a unique class on Math class. Even if the teacher is explaining the problem, students can teach each other and learn the subject more deeply. Because of this, it is comfortable for us to ask questions and easy to understand the study. Like this class I hope that the students could act positively, if we had an opportunity to share our opinion. I wish that we could think current affairs as a personal problem such as SDGs by thinking positively.

Because of all the reasons above, I believe that Japanese are too busy in many ways. It may say something about our character. However, I hope that Japanese could have a good work and life balance and have a reason for living. I also hope that the time spent with our family and friends will increase from now on.