

## Educational aspirations and the warmingup/coolingdown process: A comparative study between Japan and South Korea

Nakamura, Takayasu, author

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### Abstrak

Stereotypical views of education in Japan have traditionally included an 'examination hell' among the key features of the system. However, two major modifications need to be made to that view. First, although competition for leading universities remains intense, overall entrance exams in Japan are not as competitive now as they used to be. This is because the declining birth rate is already feeding through to reduced numbers of candidates, while there has also been a marked increase in the number of higher education institutions and places for students. Secondly, the 'examination hell' is not only a feature of Japan, but may also be found in other East Asian countries, such as South Korea, China, Taiwan and Singapore. This paper focuses on Japan and South Korea and examines how the two systems go about 'warmingup' students' educational aspirations, and then 'coolingdown' those aspirations for those students who are unlikely to fulfil them. Some great differences emerge between these two 'diploma disease' societies of East Asia, and between the presentday Japanese educational system and its traditional image.