

From Classroom to Workplace: The Effects of Neoliberal Policies on Education at Waseda University

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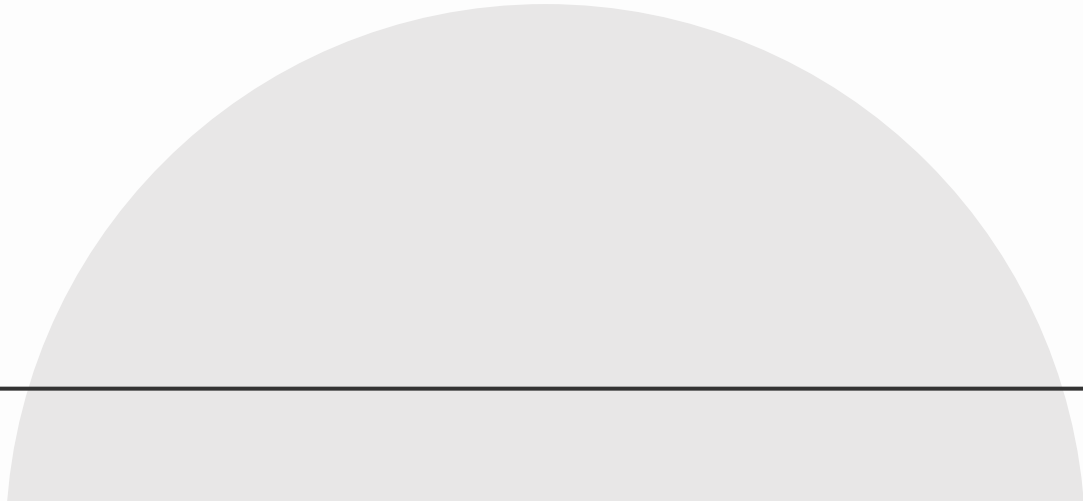
**Research
Implications**

01

Purposes of Education

Definitions and concepts.

**Why do you go to
school anyway?**



**Let's delve into
theories!**

Insights from educational theorist

David Labaree

- Democratic Equality: Education as a mechanism to prepare citizens for participation in democratic society.
- Social Efficiency: Education as a means to train individuals for the labor market.
- Social Mobility: Education as a tool for individuals to improve their social status.

John Dewey

- Democracy and Education: Dewey argued that education is fundamental to democracy. Schools are not just places for academic learning but are also social institutions where democratic principles are practiced. Therefore, he argues that it should aim to create informed and engaged citizens who can contribute to their communities. Dewey emphasized the importance of active participation and critical thinking in fostering a democratic society.

Insights from educational theorist

Gert Biesta

- Qualification: The acquisition of knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for personal development and employment.
- Socialization: Integration into existing social, cultural, and political orders, helping students understand and navigate their social contexts.
- Subjectification: Encouraging students to become independent, autonomous individuals capable of critical thinking and self-determination.

Paulo Freire

- Critical Pedagogy: Education as a practice of freedom. Freire emphasized the role of education in empowering the oppressed and fostering critical consciousness.
- Dialogical Education: Learning as a dialogical process where teachers and students learn from each other.

Other general/societal purposes

- Economic Development: Education as a driver of economic growth by creating a skilled workforce.
- Social Cohesion: Promoting social harmony and cohesion through shared values and knowledge.
- Cultural Transmission: Preserving and transmitting cultural heritage and values.
- Innovation and Progress: Fostering innovation and scientific progress through research and critical thinking.
- Global Citizenship: Preparing individuals to engage with global issues and diverse cultures.

Education for the Public Good

- Education serves the public good.
- Education is crucial within the framework of democracy.
- It fosters informed and engaged citizens.
- Education enhances societal and democratic processes.



02

Neoliberalism and Modern Education

Definitions and concepts.



What's the Deal with Neoliberalism?

Definitions and concepts.



**A world without
capitalism?**

Capitalist Realism

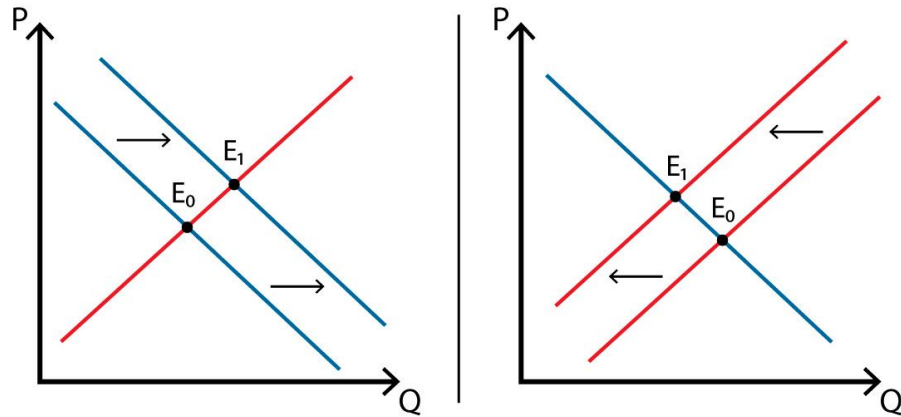
"the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now **impossible even to imagine** a coherent alternative to it."



Dominant ideology?

The market logic

- markets, driven by supply, demand and competition, are **self-regulating** and lead to the **most efficient outcomes** when left largely free of government intervention.



Friedrich A. Hayek

The Price System

- Price = knowledge/information of countless individual decisions
 - a mechanism for **communicating information**.
 - efficient resource allocation **without central planning**.

Economic Calculation Problem:

- critiqued **socialism** for its inefficiency in using information.

Deregulation



Critiques to Neoliberalism

- **Ethos Criticisms:** Critics argue that neoliberalism **commodifies** social relations and **prioritizes market values** over human values.
- **Inequality:** Neoliberal policies are said to increase **economic inequality**.
- **Undermining Democracy:** Critics claim that neoliberalism can erode democratic institutions by prioritizing economic liberties over democratic decision-making.



From Public Good to Private Gain

The Effects of Neoliberalism on Education

Education and the market

“It dislocates education by commodifying its intrinsic value and emphasizing directly transferable skills and competencies. Non Monetary values are marginalized and, with them, the nonmonetary ethos that is essential in sustaining a healthy democratic society.”

- del Cerro Santamaría, G. (2019)

Key Principles

- **Marketization:** Education treated as a commodity.
- **Privatization:** Shift of educational responsibilities from public to private sector.
- **Competition:** Encouraged among educational institutions.
- **Accountability:** Emphasis on measurable outcomes and standardized testing.

Erosion of the Public Sphere

Labaree

- Social Mobility and Social Efficiency over Democratic Equality

Citizenship education is undermined.

- Students are “human resources” and laborers rather than citizens that participate in democratic dialogue and discourse.

Effects on Curriculum and Content

- Prioritization of economically valuable subjects (e.g., STEM).
- Marginalization of arts and humanities.
- Standardization of curricula, favoring efficiency over creativity.
- Commodification of knowledge and a focus on employability.

Impact on Funding and Privatization:

- Reduced government spending on education.
- Increased tuition fees and reliance on student loans.
- Rise of for-profit educational institutions.
- Widening educational inequalities and social disparities.

Japan and Neoliberal Reform

- 1990s Neoliberal Reforms:
 - Prime Minister Nakasone's policies
 - Corporate management practices
 - Deregulation and market-driven policies
- Governance: Centralized management, private sector models
- Research: Market-driven, increased private sector involvement
- National universities being more independent

03

Waseda University: A Case Study

To what extent does neoliberalism influence Waseda University?



Waseda's Educational Policies & Goals

Waseda's educational missions



1. Independence of Scholarship

Focuses on having a critical mind that is free from all constraints and focused on the nature of reality.



2. Practical Application of Scholarship

Developing academic research by its application in culture, society, and industry.



3. Fosterings of Good Citizens

Sending out global citizens into society with sufficient knowledge, moral character, courage, physical strength, and flexible sensitivity.

Macro-level possibilities and assumptions



@Waseda

**Internationalization of
education and
preparation for the
global market**

- School of International Liberal Studies (SILS)
- Center for International Education (CIE)
- Global Leadership Fellows Program (GLFP)
- Global Education Center (GEC)

**Alumni's contribution
in business world is
focused**

- "Alumni's leading the business world"
- As many as 1,161 companies listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange Prime Market have graduates of Waseda university serving as CEOs, presidents, or chairpersons.
 - Messages from leaders at SONY, TOYOTA, Panasonic, MITSUBISHI ELECTRICS, BCG, and etc are introduced



The President's Vision

We interviewed Aiji Tanaka, the President of Waseda University to hear about his insights on the role and goal of this institution.

Conducting the Interview

- Two of us interviewed the President Tanaka in person
- Interview content consisted of several questions
 - What is the role of Waseda?
 - How do you define a “global leader”?
 - What is the ideal education that Waseda aims for? ... and more

“Waseda’s goal in education is to produce individuals equipped with both intellectual resilience and flexible sensitivity”

**—Aiji Tanaka,
President of Waseda University**

What does this mean?



Intellectual Resilience

【たくましい知性】

Seeking evidence-based answers to
unanswerable questions



Flexible Sensitivity

【しなやかな感性】

Having the willingness to contribute
to the world

What does this mean?



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Success in any field

Holistic Development and Vocationalism are **not** a dichotomy. Having both attributes allow individuals to shine in any field.



The Professors' Ideologies

We surveyed professors from numerous departments at Waseda University to hear about their ideologies as an educator.

Conducting the Interviews

- We each interviewed one of our own professors
- Interview content consisted of questions on the background of the professor, as well as their thoughts on the importance and goals of higher education
 - What do you think is the importance of higher education?
 - What do you believe the goal of Waseda is? Is Waseda currently fulfilling this goal?

The Importance of Education

- “Students need to learn how to learn” - SILS professor
- “Students should have a basic humanistic education. Even if this takes place in high school, it is important that this is continued somehow in university at a higher level” - SILS professor

Learning How to Think

- “The importance of university is to acquire the ability to live in a broad sense. Of course, knowledge specialized in politics is necessary, but I believe that the most important thing is the ability to think logically, which is cultivated in the process of learning political science” - SPSE professor
- “I wish for students to think about problems without a definite answer and challenge preexisting ideas” - FSE professor
- “Schools exist to broaden students’ horizons by providing an environment where talented individuals can encounter similar individuals and learn how to think from new perspectives” - FSE professor
 - Also networking!

Empowering Tomorrow's Citizens

- “Higher education is above simple vocational schools or for career development, but having a better understanding of society, and learning about how the society is actively shaped is the main purpose” - SILS professor
- “The importance of higher education lies in fostering an understanding of democracy and the rules of society, and in nurturing students’ ambition to bring society into the future” - SILS professor

Freedom in Teaching

- “Waseda University does not pressure labs or professors to produce results - that is why we can freely delve into a large variety of academic fields and teach whatever we believe is best for students” - FSE professor
- “Facilities are given freedom to choose and decide what to teach, ideal freedom in teaching for professor” - SILS professor

Summary

- General takeaways
 - Education is about knowing how to approach problems
 - Learning new perspectives
 - Functioning well in society, while also challenging old norms
- Therefore, the professors tended to place value on individual nourishment. However, the end justification was also about how society could benefit in turn.
- Waseda tends to give professors freedom over their syllabi.



The Students' Opinions

We surveyed students of all classes and departments at Waseda University to hear about their experience here.

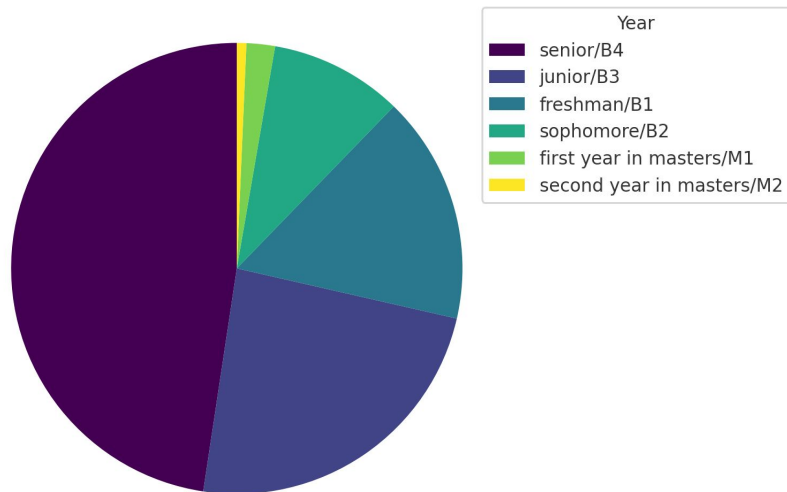
Conducting the Survey

- We conducted a multiple-choice survey on students at Waseda University
- Survey consisted of questions on the background of the students, as well as their thoughts on the importance and goals of higher education
 - What are you planning to do after graduating Waseda?
 - What do you think is the purpose of university education?
 - Why did you come to Waseda?
 - How much have you learned throughout your university education in contrast to your initial expectations?
 - What has Waseda University taught you? (What opportunities did this institution give you?)

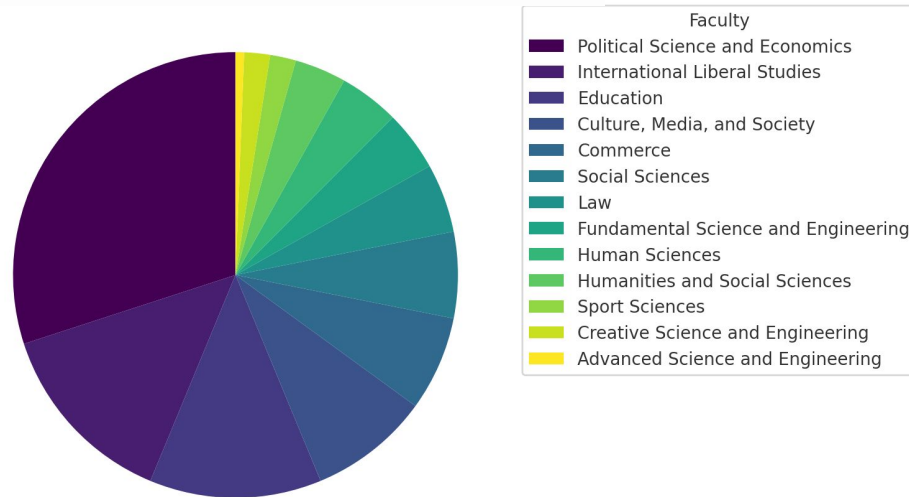
Summary of Survey Respondents

- Number of responses: 160
- Respondents include students from all faculties and classes.

Composition of Students by Year

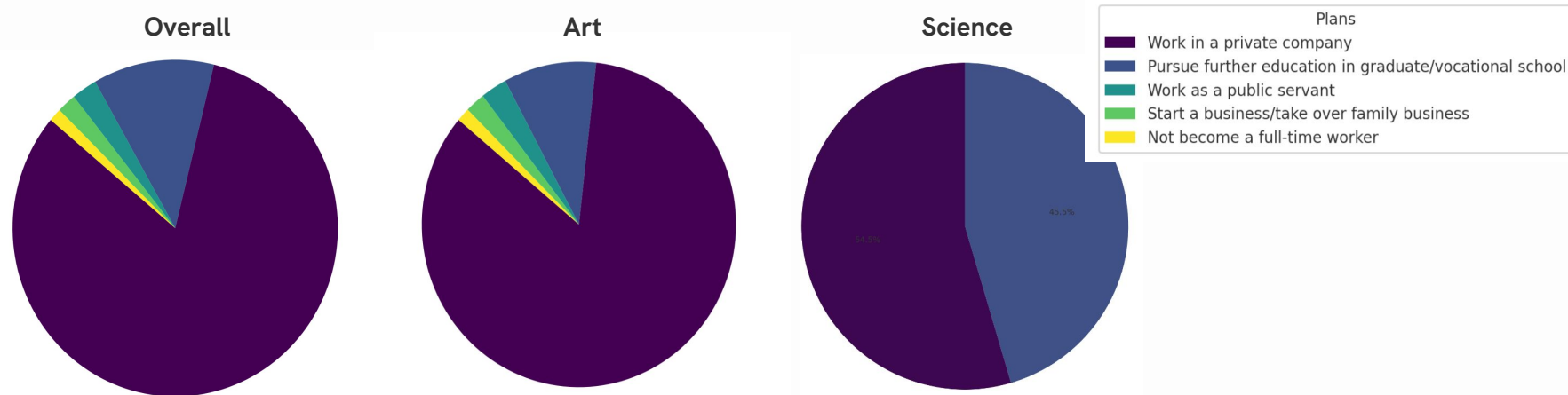


Composition of Students by Department



Summary of Survey Respondents (Plans After Graduation)

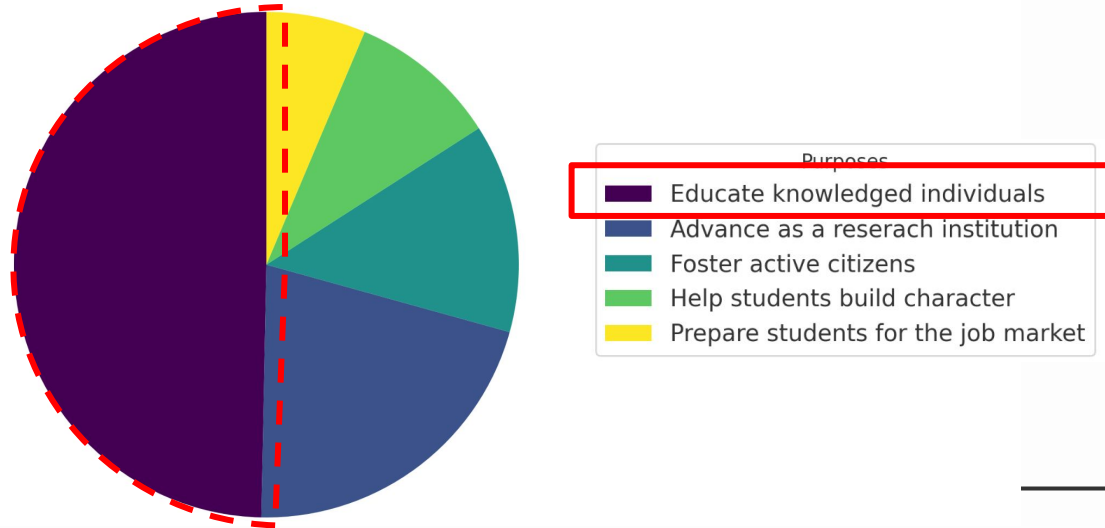
- More than 80 percent of students plan to work in a private company after graduation.
- Many science students (理工学部) pursue further education in higher institutions.
- Other plans include: work as a public servant / start a business / become a part-time worker



How they see University Education

- 50 percent of the students believe that the purpose of university education is to educate individuals.
- 20 percent of the students believe advancing as a research institution is the main purpose of university, which the university follows by fostering active citizens and helping students building character.
- Only 5 percent of the students think university is for preparing students for the job market.

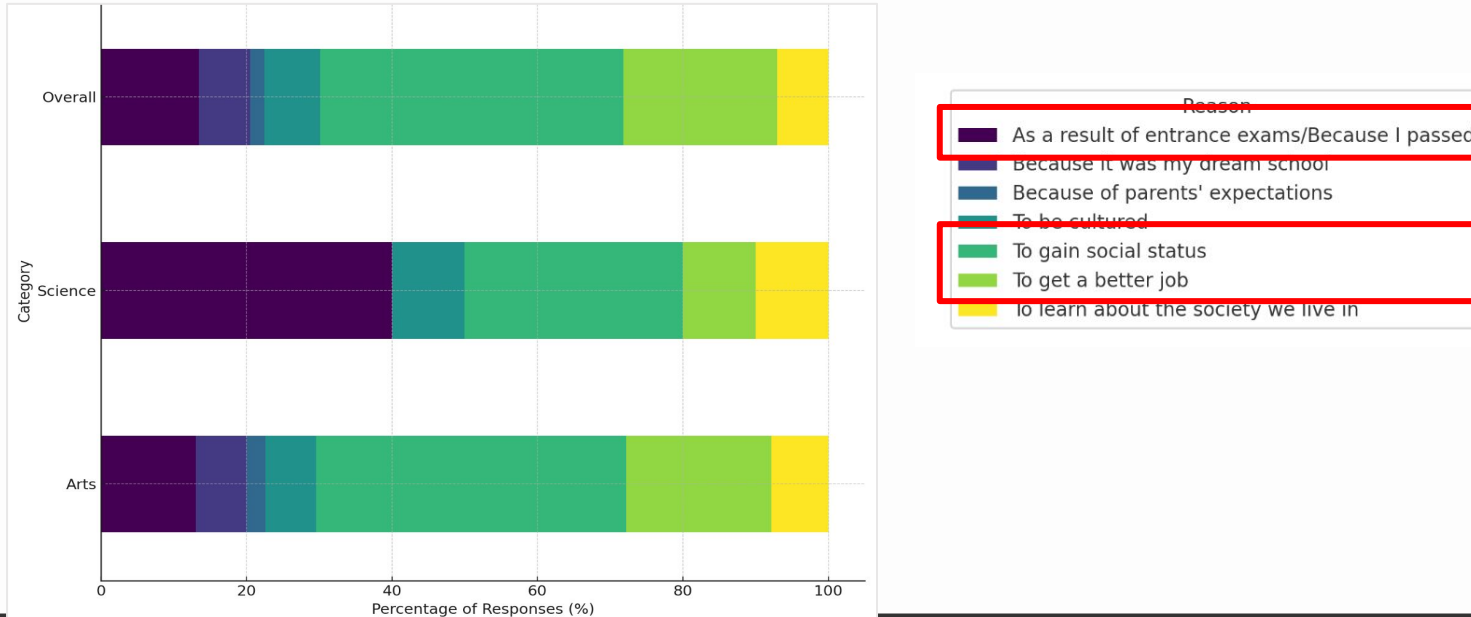
What do you think is the purpose of university education ?



What they want from Waseda

- Many students responded that the main reason they came to Waseda was to gain social status, which is followed by to get a better job
- Many science students chose Waseda as a result of entrance exams.

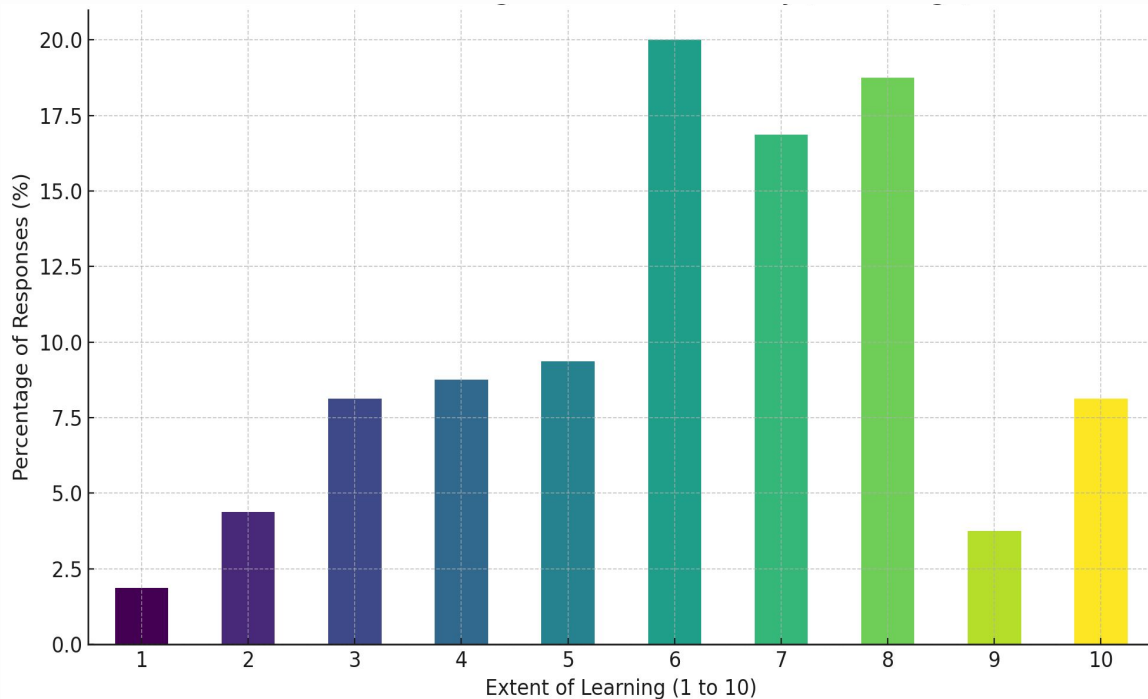
Why did you come to Waseda ?



How much they learned throughout University

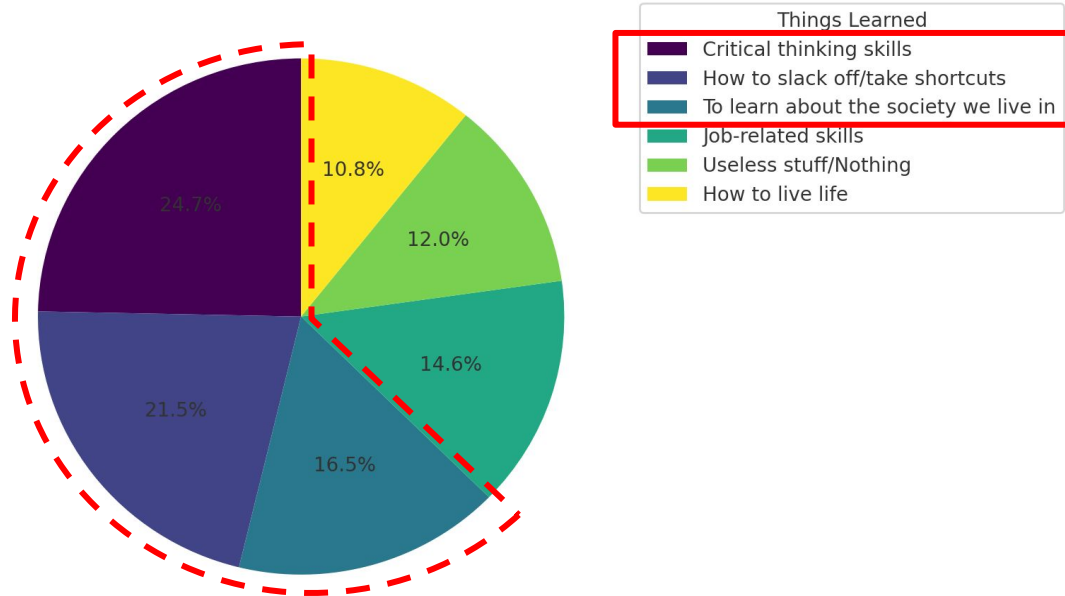
- How much they learned throughout university varies from student to student.
- 50-60 percent of the students think they learned about 6-8 out of 10.

How much do you think have learned throughout university?



What they learned throughout university

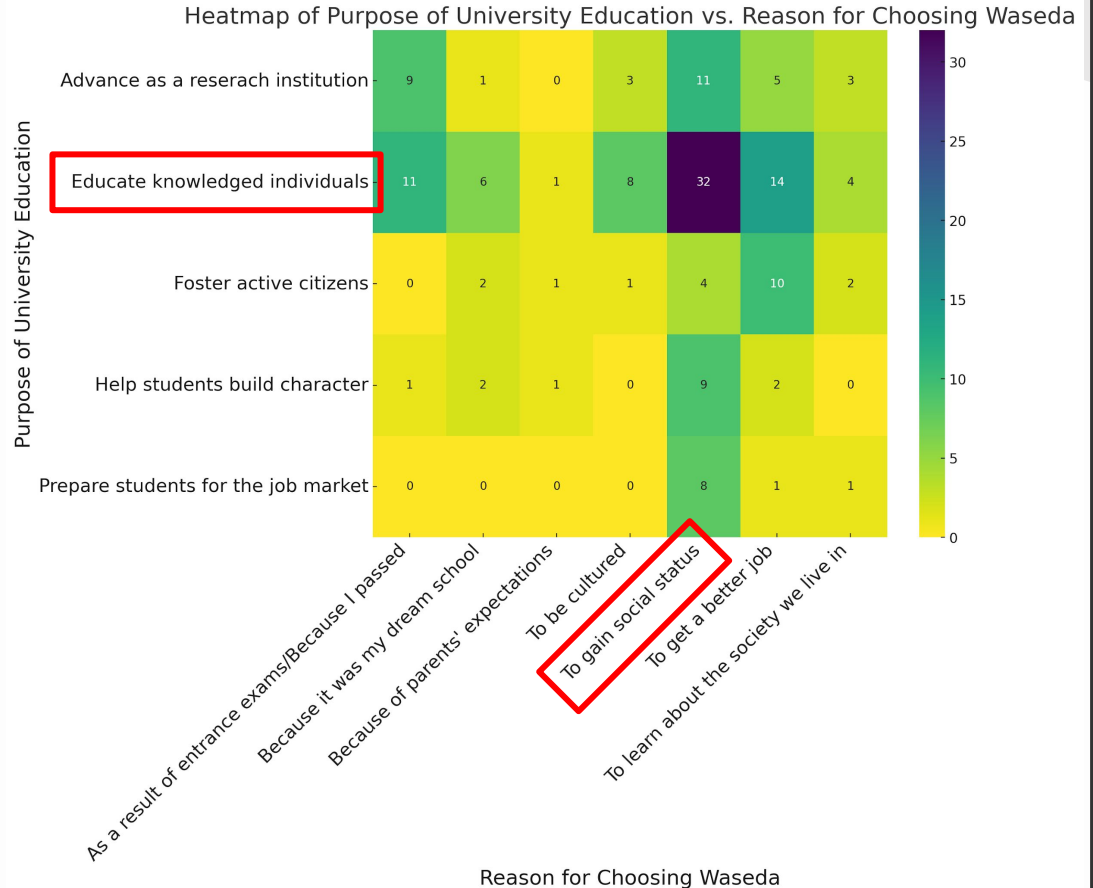
Things Learned at Waseda University



- 25 percent of the students think they learned critical thinking skills.
- Other popular answers include how to slack off/take shortcuts and to learn about the society we live in.
- Only 15 percent of the student learned job-related skills from university.

Survey Summary

- Purposes of University Education: Educate knowledged individuals
- Reasons for choosing Waseda: Gaining social status, getting a better job
- Although many students recognize that the purpose of university is to educate knowledged individuals, their main purpose at Waseda is getting status or a better job



Research Implications: The Waseda Reality

What people believe -

President

Holistic Learning

Teachers

Learning cultivates critical thinking skills and empowers tomorrow's citizens. Freedom of teaching is critical for this.

Students

Students come to Waseda for jobs but they also recognize that the higher education is for academia

Research Implications: The Waseda Reality

Commodification of the degree/credentials but not so much the learning itself

- No apparent commodification of the learning (at least in our data)

Efforts in holistic learning exist

- Waseda University aims for holistic education isolated from the job market
- Waseda University places importance on the process of learning (input → output) as a skill to be used both in research and in societal contexts

Limitations and Further Research

- Lack of student input (needed more answers for accuracy)
- Quality of questions - our questions were opinion based, making it difficult to judge how objectively reliable the answers were.
 - Hard to discern actual incentives at play

Discussions

- How much do students truly place value on the university's vision?
 - Do they study to actualize such visions?
- What gives Waseda its edge in the education market?
 - What does Waseda commodify that gives their credentials value?
 - Could holistic learning actually be a commodity? (Is it promoted to help with the workforce?)
- Should Waseda directly promote an academic system for citizenship/public good?
- Does the emphasis on credentials in Japan give education more potential in fostering other purposes of education(democratic/holistic/etc.)?

Audience Discussion

What do you think is an important purpose of education?

What neoliberal influences can you see in your institution/experiences?

Thank you!