

Opinions language- Japanese university entrance examinations: A view

Read through the article below and decide if you generally agree or disagree with the writer.

Many people think that I have always been an outspoken critic of the university entrance examinations in Japan, but in fact I started out thinking that I should just ignore the entrance exams because they are basically a Japanese problem and therefore none of my business. What changed my point of view? Well, I've been coming to Japan for about fourteen years now, and everywhere I've given lectures or workshops, the audience in Japan always seems to steer the discussion around to the university entrance examinations. People ask me "What is your opinion of the entrance exams in Japan?" At first I thought they wanted to hear if I approved or disapproved, but in reality what they wanted was a chance to say that "In my opinion, entrance exams are really bad for communicative language teaching in Japan", "From my point of view, they are dreadful for Japanese youth", "I believe they are too expensive" or "The way I see it, they are totally unfair". Through all this, I stressed that the entrance exams are not a problem for an outsider to deal with. My view remained that this is a Japanese problem, one that only Japanese will ever be able to solve. Although they could see my point, people argued back that maybe I should speak out on the issue because I can't be fired. To state their views in another way, I could say whatever I liked, perhaps stirring up useful discussion of the issues, and then leave, without suffering the consequences that teachers in Japan might face.

There is a part of me that says maybe it would be better to keep the entrance exam system the way it is in Japan, so that bright Japanese kids keep coming to study in my country instead, but another part of me realizes that I am watching a terrible injustice. If you ask me, many kids waste a great deal of time and effort, and finally major in something that isn't at all interesting to them.

However, I agree that problems in admissions decisions are not just an issue in Japan. I would say that we have persistent problems in the American admissions systems as well. However, using hundreds of different university entrance examinations developed by amateurs to help raise money for the universities is not on any list of our problems. I will accept that admissions problems also exist elsewhere in the world, especially in Asia. Indeed the stakes are particularly high in Asia because it seems clear to me that the country that first figures out how to test and teach English effectively may have a distinct economic advantage over other countries. In recent years, both China and Korea have developed unified nationwide professionally-developed English entrance exam systems, and thus they may have developed an important advantage over Japan.

I hope you have found something in this paper that has made you think more deeply about the issues involved in entrance testing in Japan. It seems clear to me that the future of Japanese young people is far too important to be left in the hands of the hundreds of teams of amateur test developers in the many universities all over Japan. Think about it, and don't be afraid to express your opinion when the need arises. Maybe I can get you a job in Hawaii.

Read through the text again and find language above for the functions below (you might need to change the pronouns):

Asking for people's opinions

Giving your opinion

Stressing your opinion

Agreeing

Disagreeing

Choose one of the underlined views above and give your views on it. Can your partner guess which thing you are talking about? Do they agree or disagree?