

# Japan OECD Joint Research Global Co-creation Project: Asobi-bA/ -bA- for Playful Learning

## 1. Preamble

Education is a social and cultural activity. It can easily become a closed activity within a country or region, and create a number of "norms". This can accelerate the division of society. Many people say "I have no choice" and give up challenging themselves to change such norms. Is this a healthy example of a democratic society?

There are some initiatives by educators who are aware of such problems; however, the reality is that within the educational ecosystem, these only offer temporary relief. Society as a whole must update education, and many obstacles must be overcome and removed.

In Japan, being a teacher was one of the top occupations that children aspired to in the past, but that is not the case today. Perhaps children no longer see teachers as bright and shiny persons, and schools as attractive places. How does the world view education in Japan? Is there any special benefit remaining in education in Japan that we are not aware of?

We believe that the spirit of the "OECD Tohoku School" (*We are more than our past, more than our traditions, at a new frontier*) is a manifestation of the underlying strength of Japanese education and resilience. We would like to use this as a starting point to explore the education systems and curricula in 2040 in a bottom-up fashion based on the voices of children and teachers on the frontlines. Without this, we will not be able to create a society without barriers that will benefit everyone.

Through our collaborations with OECD, we have found that there are people around the world who share and empathize with our concerns. We would like to expand this circle even further. Together with those who share the vision, we would like to co-create a bottom-up initiative for education for the year 2040 based on the following framework:

- For a bottom-up approach, it is essential to demonstrate individual agency. The spirit of "play" is placed at the center of the project so that more people can work on it while having fun and feeling rewarded. 【-bA- for playful learning without walls/barriers】
- We support diverse decentralized efforts to expand dots to lines and lines to surfaces to achieve collective deep impact, and show a prototype of how to structure a bottom-up curriculum (including updating the educational views and values of the society as a whole). 【Za system】
- In the course of these activities, we will evaluate how the agency of the participants, including students, are transformed. 【Development of process evaluation】 .

As a step to develop these efforts, we are going to organize an international co-creation event in Paris in 2024 to provide an opportunity for dialogue among stakeholders. We believe that this will further expand the circle of co-creation among diverse people and provide opportunities to use their voices to provide input into education.

Keiji Matsuda  
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## 2. About Japan OECD Joint Research Global Co-creation Project: Asobi-bA/ -bA- for Playful Learning

The Global Co-creation Project "Asobi-bA/ -bA- for Playful Learning-" is taking place between 2022 and 2024 under the framework of the Japan OECD Joint Research. Its secretarial function is provided by Tokyo Gakugei University, with cooperation from the OECD. We aim to work with diverse stakeholders, through public-private collaboration, including that of teachers and students at diverse schools, local governments, boards of education, researchers, companies, ministries, and NPOs in Japan and overseas.

The overall goal of the joint research is for Japan and the OECD to work together in an effort to explore effective curriculum design and implementation in ways in which students can learn to exercise their sense of agency and transformative competencies to their full potential and can thrive in the world of 2030, as suggested in the OECD Learning Compass 2030. Through this joint research, Tokyo Gakugei University as a flagship university for teacher education/training is expected to take a lead in educating teachers who will be responsible for future schools in Japan, and in changing the methods of teacher training in collaboration with the rest of the world.

The Asobi-bA project is a successor to the OECD Tohoku School Project (2012-2014).<sup>1</sup> This was an education project to support a creative recovery from the triple disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident, all of which occurred in March 2011. In March 2021, 10 years after the Great East Japan Earthquake, the workshop "Since then. From now on,"<sup>2</sup> was jointly organized by the OECD and Fukushima University (in cooperation with Tokyo Gakugei University), and one year later in March 2022, we conducted the workshop "Open Dialogue: Learning from Disasters to Build Resilience in Education" with a concept of "overcoming barriers"<sup>3</sup> which arise as a result of division, dichotomies, and peer pressure felt by today's students inside and outside the classroom. The Asobi-bA- project is designed based on lessons learned from OECD Tohoku School and these workshops.

In response to various issues in schools and society today, such as bullying, non-attendance at school, high-stakes examinations, excessive workload on teachers, etc., we aim to eliminate "barriers" based on prejudices and values that have been created by "conventional wisdom" and "common sense," and implement a new form of future education. We will also evaluate its impact on diverse members in order to make use of such field practice in future education policy.

## 3. Project Configuration

In this project, diverse stakeholders such as students, teachers, schools, universities, local governments/education boards, NPOs, and companies form a "za" (team) in order to experimentally implement a new curriculum (and/or pedagogies) which aims to eliminate barriers today, and evaluate its impact among diverse members. With cooperation from the OECD, schools and researchers from overseas will also participate in the project.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD Tohoku School: About 100 junior and senior high school students from the regions affected by the disaster participated in the project and worked on the regional reconstruction/re-creation based on their ideas in collaboration with diverse stakeholders such as teachers, private firms, and local governments.

OECDTohoku School on Tokyo Center Website :  
<https://www.oecd.org/tokyo/topic/oecd-tohokuschooljapanese/oecd-tohoku-school.htm>  
OECD Tohoku School on Fukushima University Website:  
[HOME of oecd\\_tohoku\\_school \(oecdtohokuschool.sub.jp\)](http://HOME.of.oecd_tohoku_school(oecdtohokuschool.sub.jp))

<sup>2</sup> "Since then. From now on, ", voices of committee students  
[私たちの想い|あれから。これから、\(jupiter354.wixsite.com\)](http://私たちの想い|あれから。これから、(jupiter354.wixsite.com))

International workshops will be organized twice a year (planned for March and August) to help with networking and co-creation among members of the “za”. In 2024, we are planning to organize a Paris Festival (tentative name) in Paris.

One step to achieving our aim(s) was the organization of a Kick off workshop on 27-28 August, 2022, with a concept of ~ Welcome to Planet ‘Upside Down’ ! ~. The workshop aimed to provide places for participants to experience future education without walls in 2040 and to encourage them to question “today’s status-quo” and “common sense” in order to explore a better future. For example, students with hearing impairment took the MC’s role aiming to create “ba” - something that transcends the barriers we face between different school types. The survey result shows that over 90% of the participants answered yes to the question as to whether there was a moment where you felt that something was different from what you consider “normal” or “natural” (in other words, “a surprise”, “unease”, “awkwardness” or “discomfort”) or that there was something that didn’t sit right with you during this event. Based on the responses, we understand that the objectives of the workshop had been achieved.

For more details about the workshop, please click [here](#).

#### **4. For those who are interested in the project**

The Global Co-creation Project “Asobi-bA/ -bA- for Playful Learning” started with the desire to transcend the barriers of each individual. In order to transcend those barriers, we will use our network and knowledge to connect with diverse people to achieve bottom-up reform. We look forward to the participation of diverse schools and boards of education, which will be at the core of this project.

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