

What the world can learn from the Tohoku experience

16th OECD/Japan Seminar

“Key Competencies and Skills for the 21st Century

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The background

- A research on the observed and potential impact of the OECD-Tohoku school (OTS) project
- Two key hypotheses tested by this research:
 - A new, original pattern of education innovation has been emerging from the OTS project
 - The OTS innovation model might have a significant impact potential on the development of education in Japan and elsewhere



Themes

- Understanding the OTS project
- The impact of the OTS project and its relevance for the development of 21st century skills
- The „Tohoku change model”
- The future impact potential of the OTS project in Japan and elsewhere



Understanding the nature of the OTS project

- The nature of the OTS project: sixteen specific features identified
- An initiative building on existing education approaches in Japan



Features identified/1



- An extraordinary post-catastrophic context
- The dominance of external (non-school related) goals
- Focus on out-of-school activities
- A model based on regional cooperation
- Strong involvement of external stakeholders

Features identified/2



- Limited involvement of and impact on participating schools
- Student control
- The presence of a number of well identifiable key actors
- Strong international component
- A bottom-up innovation model

Features identified/3



- Moderately supportive education policy context
- Cross-sectoral dimension
- Conceptual eclecticism
- Internal diversity
- Dispersed leadership
- Networked institutional structure

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Building on what already exists

- School based extra-curricular activities
(*tokubetsu katsudou, bukatsu*)
- Community schools
- Education in youth movements
- Integrated studies
(*sogotekina gakushu; sogo-gakushu*)
- Active, cooperative teaching methods
- Alternative education



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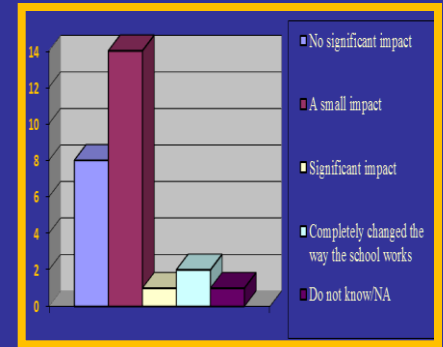


The observed impact of the OTS project

- Three types of impact observed
 - Impact on schools
 - Impact on teachers and teaching practices
 - Impact on pupils
- The relevance of the OTS project for the development of 21st century skills

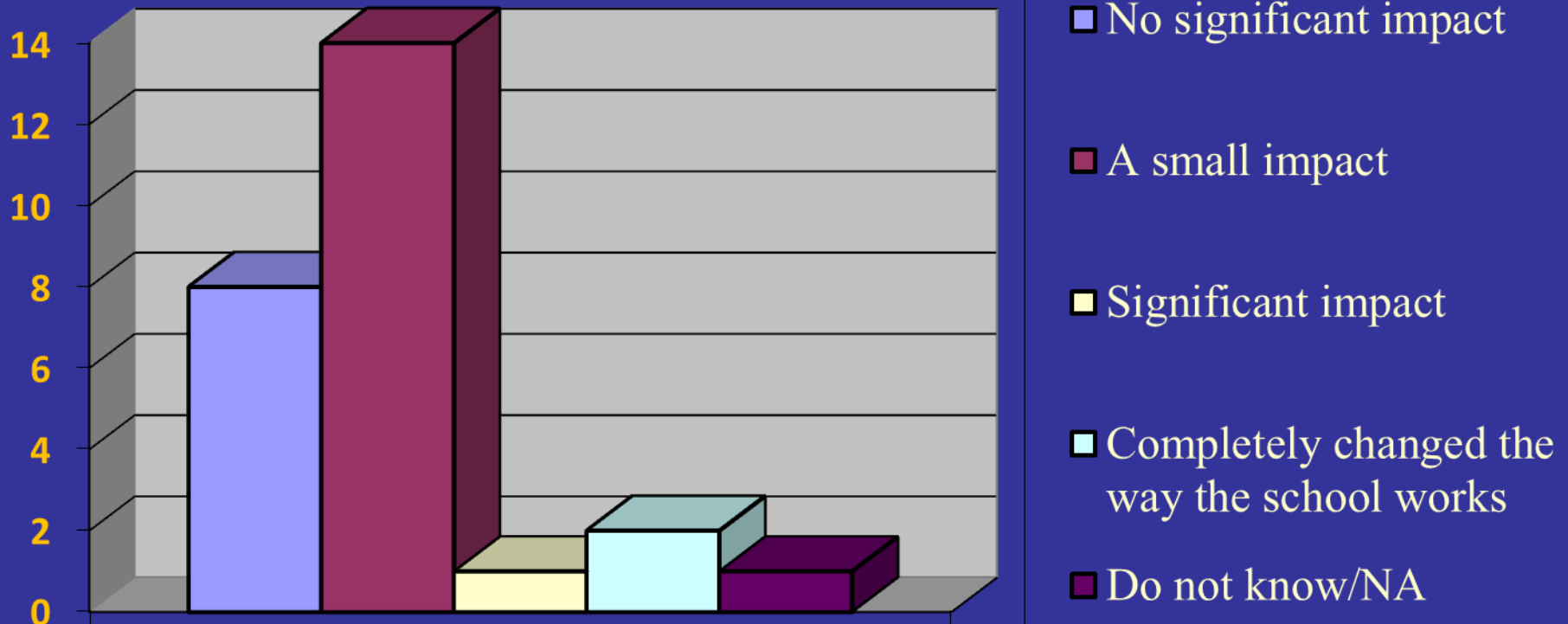
Impact on schools

- Small impact: only on schools attended by participating pupils
- The leaders of these schools seem to be fully aware of the program and they want to use it
- The subject area „integrated studies” has been seen as a potential domain to use the results of the OTS project



The distribution of teachers in function of their views about the impact of the OTS project

(N=26)



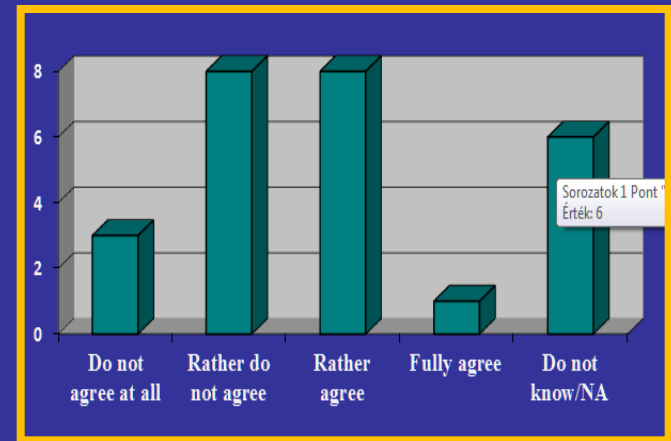
Question: “How do you see the impact of the Tohoku School Project on your own school (i.e. the school where you are currently working)?”

The observed impact of the OTS project

- Three types of impact observed
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 - Impact on teachers and teaching practices
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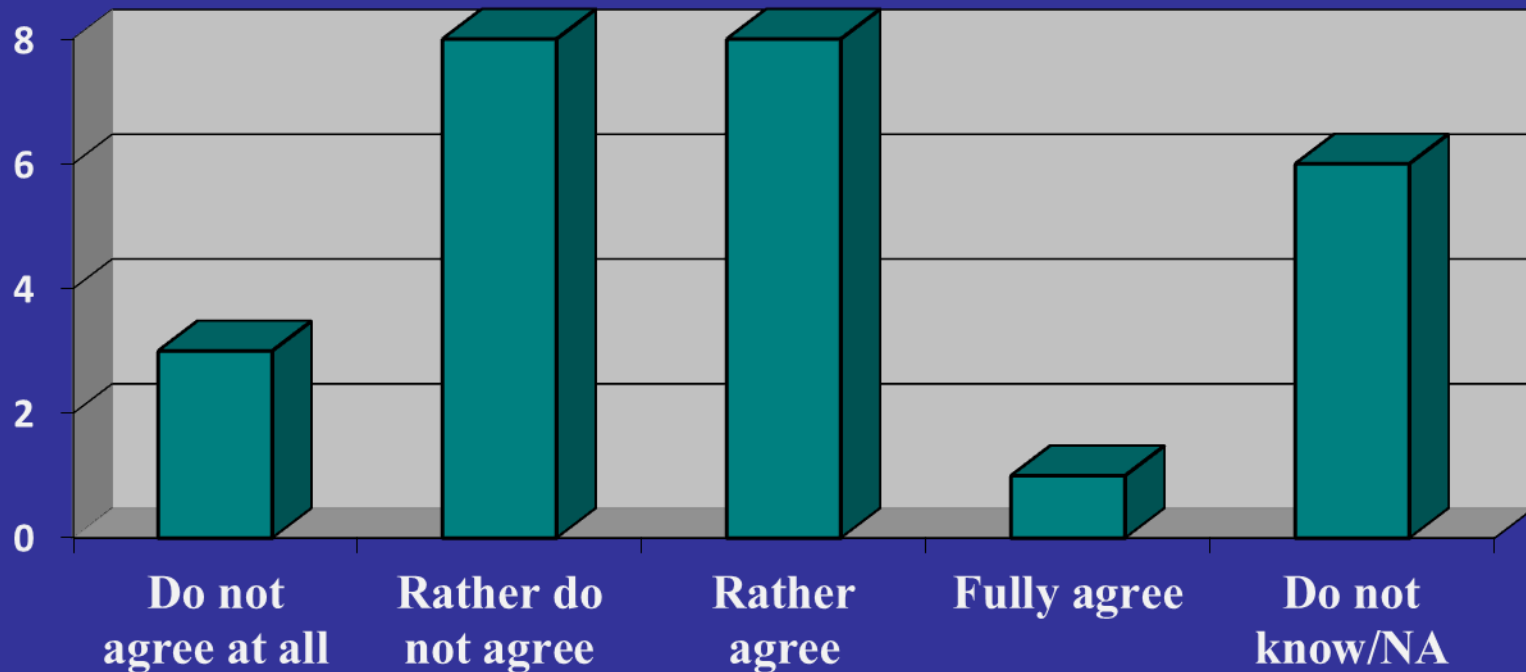
Impact on teachers and teaching practices

- Significant impact only on participating teachers
- A radical transformation of teacher/pupil relationship
 - Teachers have acquired new skills (e.g. applying project-based learning)
 - „Teachers learning from pupils”



Opinions about the support of the OTS project by teachers

(N=26)



Question: “Please indicate the degree of your agreement with the following statement.” “The Tohoku School Project has had a significant impact on the way teachers think about teaching and learning in the schools participating in the Project”

The observed impact of the OTS project

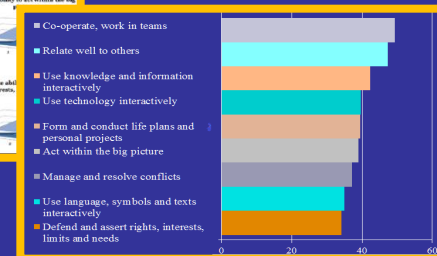
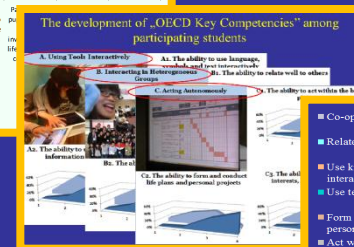
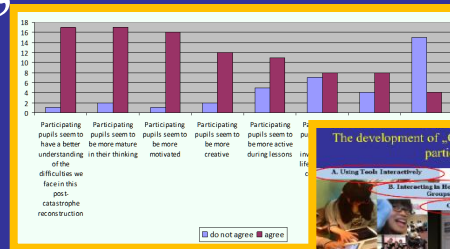
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Impact on pupils

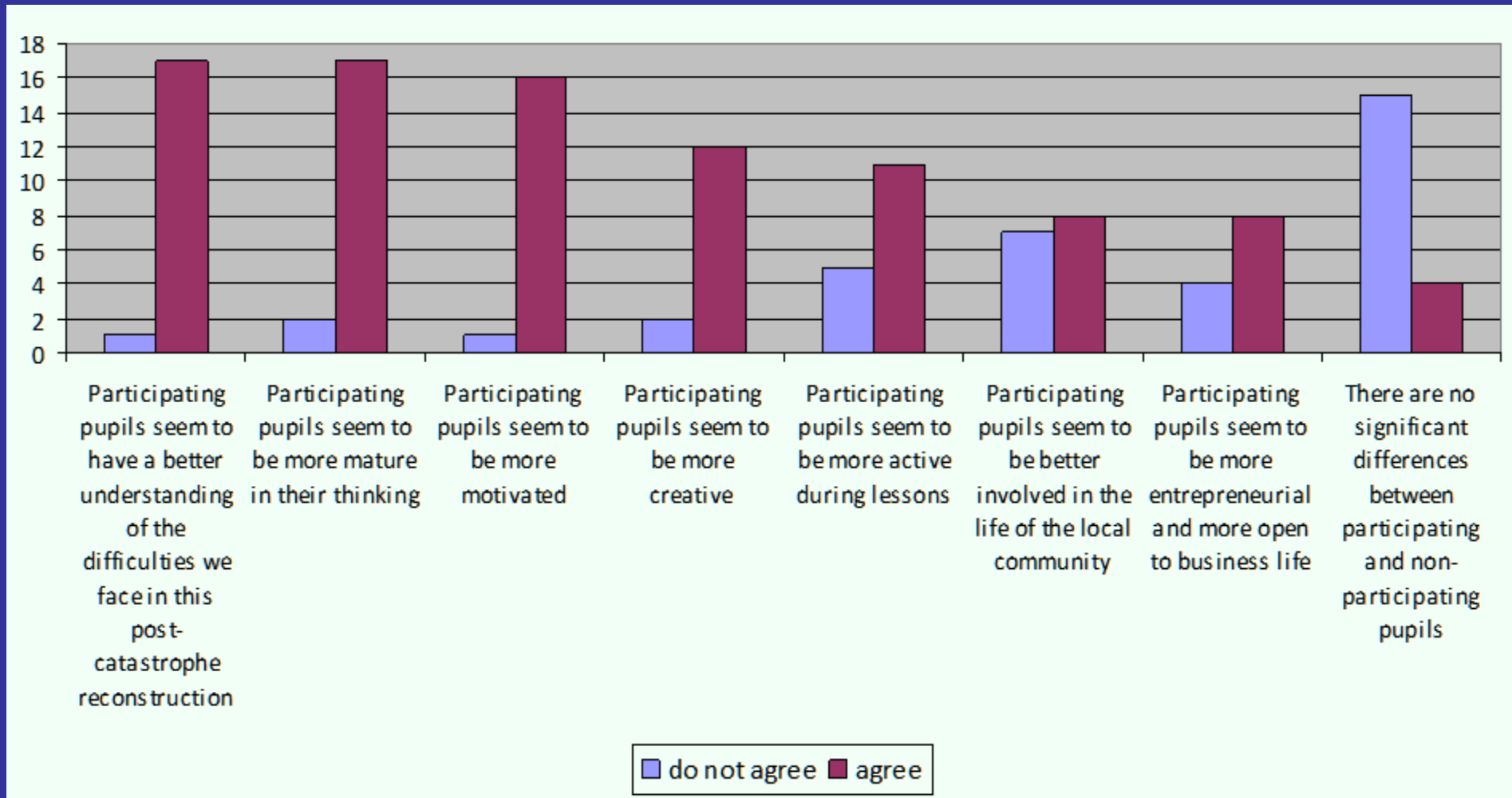
This has been the most significant impact

“There has been an improvement in their capacity to succeed in open situations, to find new, autonomous solutions, to express firmly their opinion and their wishes and to make presentations in front of a larger audience”

(quoted from a participating teacher)



Differences between students participating and not participating in the OTS project (N=26)



Question: “How do you see the difference between pupils who are directly involved in the Tohoku School Project and those who are not involved?”

The development of „OECD Key Competencies” among participating students

- 1: My skills have much improved. I am very good at this
- 2: My skills have improved. I am good at this.
- 3: My skills have improved to some extent. I am on average.
- 4: My skills have not improved. I am not good at this.

Dark Blue: prior to participating in the OECD Tohoku School (before March 2012)

Light Blue: after one-year participation in the school (March 2013)

A. Using Tools Interactively



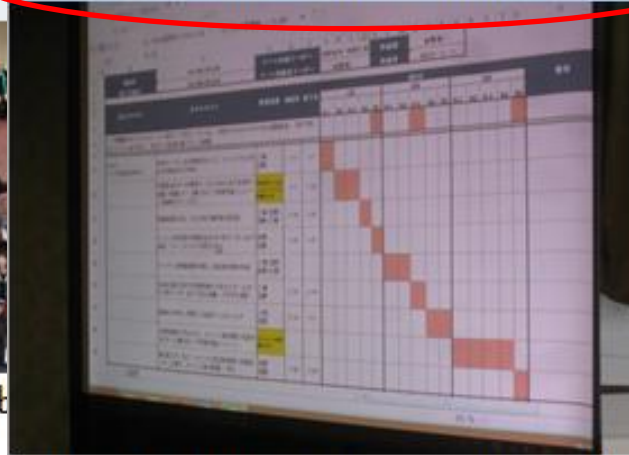
B. Interacting in Heterogeneous Groups



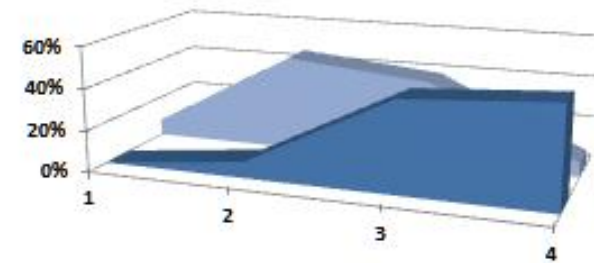
A1. The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively

B1. The ability to relate well to others

C. Acting Autonomously



C1. The ability to act within the big picture

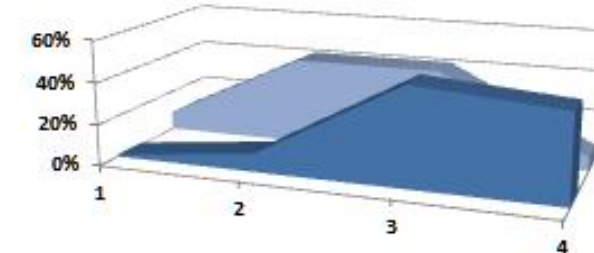
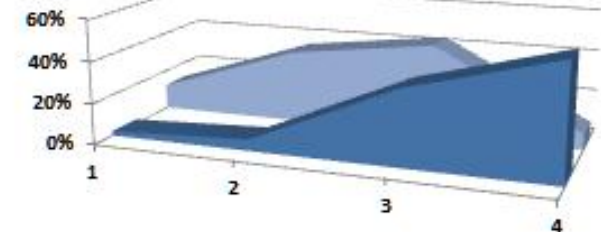
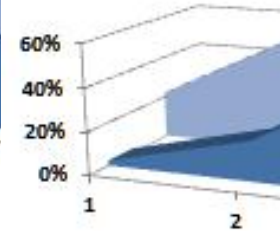
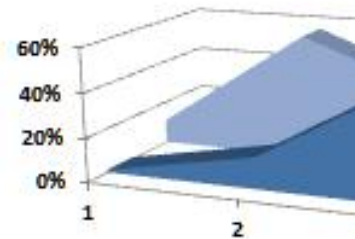


A2. The ability to use information

B2. The ability to interact

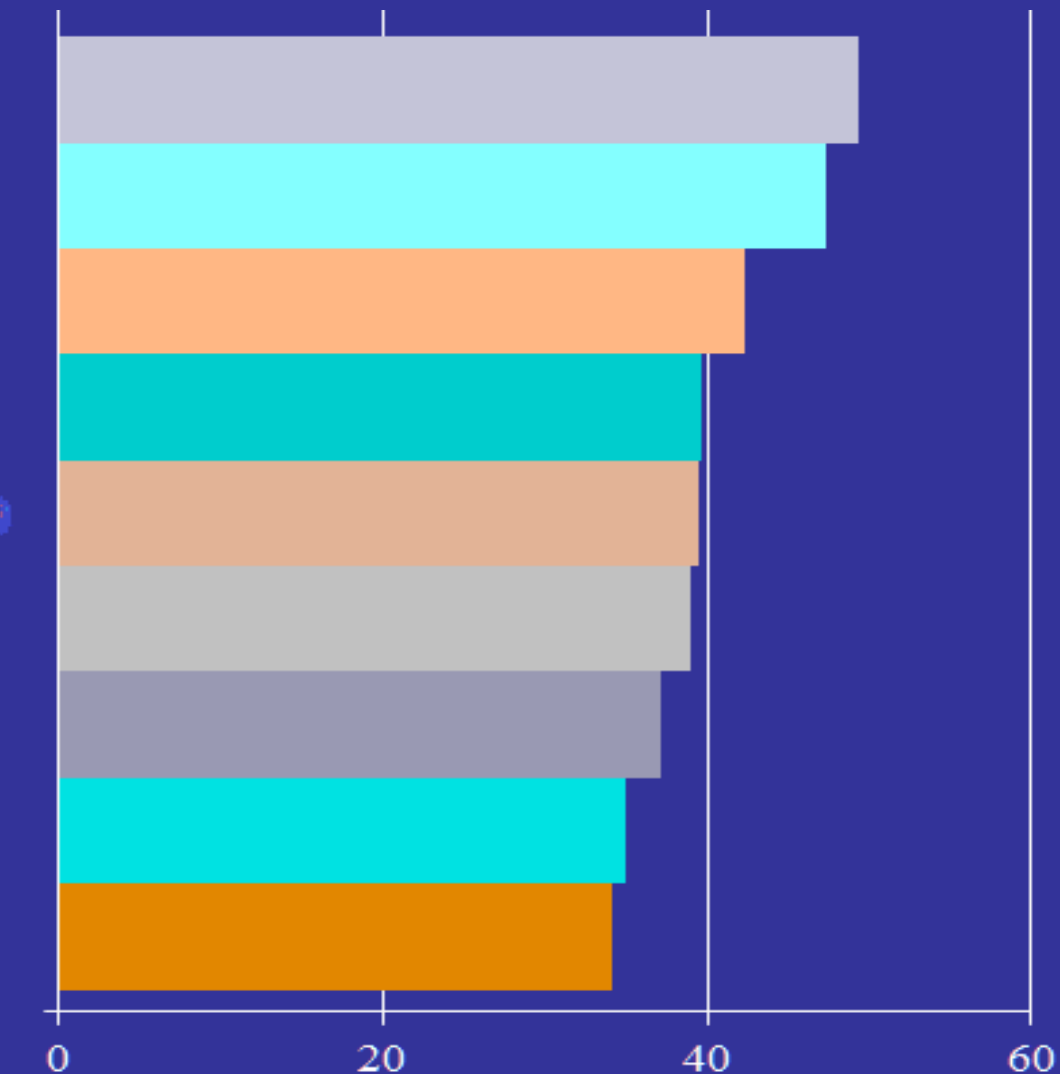
C2. The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects

C3. The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs



The improvement of „OECD Key Competencies” increase of aggregated scores (%)

- Co-operate, work in teams
- Relate well to others
- Use knowledge and information interactively
- Use technology interactively
- Form and conduct life plans and personal projects
- Act within the big picture
- Manage and resolve conflicts
- Use language, symbols and texts interactively
- Defend and assert rights, interests, limits and needs



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The Tohoku change model

- Using a particular opportunity window created by a crisis situation
- An „innovation framework”
 - An open space to find common solutions to complex problems through deliberation
 - Maintaining a certain level of „strategic ambiguity” and dispersing leadership
 - Keeping actions in a „grey area” on the borderline of the formal system and the external world, involving external actors
- A change model for education systems with relatively high level change aversion



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The impact potential of the OTS project in Japan and elsewhere

- Within Japan

- Various follow up scenarios formulated
- One of them is mainstreaming and up-scaling the OTS learning model (using elements of the OTS learning model within the formal system)



- Outside Japan

- Turning situations of distress and crisis into opportunities to generate improvement
- Understanding the logic of change in highly regulated systems and adapting change strategies to this context

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The report

The OECD-Tohoku School project

(A case of educational change and innovation in Japan)

by Gábor Halász

(30.10.2013)

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**Thank you for your
attention!**

