

## Is it just me?

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Hi, all! I'm Miu Yamada. Nice to have everybody here today! I hope that you all take my presentation to heart because I have something important to say.

Just recently, I have been thinking about dyeing my hair pink. What do you guys think? Some of you might think that it would look weird. But I think that a few might think that it suits me. However, no matter what color I dye my hair, I am still me and it is just another way to express myself and my individuality.

I feel that in Japanese secondary education, originality and individualism is not really encouraged. Students are taught to follow school rules and dress codes, and must behave the same as everyone else, like robots. Nevertheless, teachers constantly preach that, "we should recognize diversity", "we should respect individuality", and "we should not discriminate against people because they are different from us or others." We are hammered with conflicting ideas. They are teaching politicized views that were opposite of what they practice.

Why do Japanese schools not place value on individuality? Unreasonable school rules about appearance and dress rob students of their individuality as well as practice for making daily real-life decisions, a skill that they will need in the future when they become adults. There are many unreasonable school rules that students are compelled to follow without exception from the first day that they enter the school system, that I feel steal from them the originality that they were born with.

When I was in junior high, I was the chairperson of the committee to police students following school rules. I once talked with a young homeroom teacher about unreasonable school rules. That teacher was very understanding, but I was told that it would be impossible to change school rules because those in positions of authority did not feel the need for change. However, due to a discussion with fellow students and teachers, we were able to abolish a few rules, like the times for summer and winter uniform change and the school-designated bag. I think that we all appreciate that some school rules are necessary and without them, students with behavioral problems would increase if all the rules were abolished, which would make the learning environment less productive. However, there remain many unreasonable school rules, and we, the students, really need to raise our voices to address this issue.

There seems to be some light on the horizon though as some junior high schools have become more successful by abolishing some school rules. For example, Sakuragaoka Junior High School in Tokyo abolished many school rules, and the school was able to offer a flexible education tailored to diverse children.

I know how hard it is to get school rules changed by just trying to convince the teachers, so to make it easier for students who want to change school rules, I think that we should also raise our voices through social media and other outlets.

Regarding originality and creativity, KOSEN has one advantage. Students are required to express individualism at various critical times. We are required to classify

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or define ourselves like what career path we want to take or what department we want to join. This year, I participated in a programming contest and had a challenging time producing ideas for what to create. In this yearly contest, originality and creativity are highly prized. This is true of this presentation contest, too. That is why I am here now.

I want to promote a society that values individuality and cultivates creativity, individualism, freedom of thought and freedom of expression.

Is it just me, or are there some of you who feel the same way too?