

## **Ensuring the Sustainability of Growth and Development through Education: Case Studies based on 2014 ALFP Program in Japan**

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### **Introduction**

The year 2014 is a blessing to me as I have been fortunate enough to be chosen as a fellow for the Asia Leadership Fellow Program (ALFP) in Japan. I found out about the program through the information provided in the University of Malaya information list and took the challenge to apply for the fellowship. It was a tedious and competitive process as only seven Asians, including one Japanese participant are selected. Since 1996 when the premier program was conducted, out of 109 participants Asia wide, only 10 (10.9%) have attended from Malaysia until the year 2014. They are Wan A. Manan (1996), Ishak bin Shari (1997), Diana Wong (1998), Ann Lee (2001), Maznah binti Mohamad (2002), Janet Pillai (2006), Hishamuddin Rais (2007), Andrew K.L. Soh (2009), Chin Oy Sim (2013) and Vishalache Balakrishnan (2014).

The ALFP itself is very prestigious in the sense that there is a minimum age limit (35-59 years old) and it is meant for Asian public intellectuals who are deeply rooted in and committed to civil society beyond their own cultural, disciplinary and geopolitical backgrounds. The program enables the chosen participants to stay in Japan for two months primarily for exchange activities among the fellows and their counterparts in Japan. This year's theme, "The Future of Asia, the World and Humanity after Development and Growth," is very interesting and suits all nations including Malaysia very well. In the ethics and morality perspective, when growth and development takes place individuals become very rationale, possess higher order thinking skills for themselves and those around them. But when local and international issues like the shooting down of MH17, the leakage of confidential matters in education takes place internally, there needs to be serious reflection of how we perceive growth and development in our own nation and globally. Are we on the right path of wisdom, moderation, integrity and professionalism or are we side tracking towards greed, self-importance and religious and political extremism.

We had a "Look East Policy" in the 1980s in Malaysia and having stayed in Japan several times with the locals, I see a long lived strong foundation of values and culture which the Japanese community is trying very hard to preserve in spite of globalization and international youth culture. Though every country has its own policy and way of governing its society, it's high time that the government of the day in Malaysia utilize all the invaluable skills and expertise of our very own academics, economist and sociologist, to mention a few because these international public intellectuals of Malaysia are greatly welcomed all over the world.

Japan is a mono ethnic society generally though when we actually analyze the reality in Japan, it is a myth, just like Korea and China. But there are lots that Malaysians and other nations of the global society can learn from Japan, especially in the field of education; integrity, professionalism and honesty being the most essential ones. We, in several nations claim to be nations strongly grounded on spirituality but issues erupting from our nations are picturing a different story. Dishonesty, corruption, extremism and, hate speech just to mention a few are not ingredients of a spiritual nation with civil society. It is also not to conclude that such incidences do not occur in Japan, however the Japanese have never solely been focusing on religion which is very personal to every Japanese individual neither do they claim that they are religious and spiritual. Due to their long historical culture, they have become a very cultured and civilized society. My acquaintances with the Japanese society which started more than 30 years ago show that with or without religion, the Japanese are a civil society as their growth and development is sustained with a strong family and societal culture and values. To ensure such values are upfront in all nations and humanities, education plays the fundamental role of shaping and developing individuals into civil and moral society.

### **Role of Education and Educators**

Coming from a family of educators, I strongly support the need to link the educator (person) and education (the process) to current aims of growth and development to ensure sustainability in both the aspects as well as the values, skills and experiences to face opportunities and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to face the next millennium. It would be essential to understand the essence of educator, education, growth and development before I proceed with my discussion.

Who is an educator? Is it just that person called “sensei” or teacher in a place called school or college or university? No. It could be anyone who is involved in the aspects of teaching and learning of specific knowledge, beliefs and skills. I understand there is a saying in Japan that “teaching is learning together.” And this is certainly true with respect to the two months that the ALFP 2014 fellows from Bangladesh, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines and Vietnam underwent. We stayed under the same roof, learnt from each other and shared with others who provided us with knowledge and wisdom of growth and development. The situations were different; some formal others informal but the educator was always one who had a better understanding of topics discussed and we merged our own experiences and wisdom to further elaborate on such themes.

And before I proceed it is essential to understand what education is? White<sup>1</sup> explained that education is activity of thought and receptiveness to beauty and humane feeling. The whole

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<sup>1</sup>John White, “The dishwasher’s child: Education and end of egalitarianism,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 28 (1994): 173.

objective of education is to develop the mind, not to constrain it, to create individuals who are capable of doing new things and not simply repeating what previous generations have done. Yeats<sup>2</sup> says in one of his poems that education is not filling of a bucket but the lighting of a fire. And as Freire<sup>3</sup> puts it, education is not filling an empty vessel but to enrich the vessel which is already partially full with cultural norms. Chomsky<sup>4</sup> goes on to confirm that education is really aimed at helping individuals get to the point where they can learn on their own which is supported by Vygotsky's notion of Zone of Proximal Development which I further developed as Zone of Collaborative Development.<sup>5</sup> A dynamic education system must be targeted towards creative exploration, independence of thought, willingness to cross intellectual borders and to challenge accepted beliefs. Just as reconfirmed by Vygotsky<sup>6</sup> in his theory of Zone of Proximal Development that what an individual learns to do today with the help of capable peers, he should be able to do it on his own tomorrow. Now, to further understand growth and development and how such elements influence the education of individuals.

### **Growth versus Development**

What about growth and development from the education perspective? Most individual treat both the words as same and interchangeably but as an educator and educational psychologist, I would like to discuss the difference between growth and development so that they are understood correctly from an educational perspective.

Growth is related to a physical change or a process of becoming larger, longer or taller, or more numerous or more important. In other words, it can mean an increase in the size of an object, an industry or an individual. For example, anthropologist and sociologist who are in the economy field measure economic growth based on the sizes of industry, the growth of wealth of companies and industries and individual riches.

Development is a process where something or someone transforms into a different level, stage or era. It may be physical, social or psychological. An educator in an institution educates and sees the development in his or her students from the physical, social and psychological aspect. A student who starts school early in the year would have grown taller towards the end of the year. He would have made more friends and become socially more aware of the need to have two-way communication with his peers and teachers. Psychologically, he would be more understanding, tolerant and aware of his own needs and the needs of the others around him. Thus, development

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<sup>2</sup> William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, (London: Wordsworth Poetry Library, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Perspectives on Power*, (Montreal: Black Rose, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Vishalache Balakrishnan, *Real-life dilemmas in Moral Education*, (Kuala Lumpur: Department of Publications, University of Malaya, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Perspectives on Power*, (Montreal: Black Rose, 1996).

is a form of evolution from a lower or simpler to a higher or more complex form. It would also mean an improvement in the level of functioning. Based on my example about the student, it can be said that growth is a subset of the word development or even one of the characteristics of development. Due to the increase in growth of physical, social and psychological aspects of the student, he has developed into a more matured individual.

Thus there is a difference between growth and development from the educational perspective. And in other fields too. Growth is a process of growing in size, becoming more important or numerous but development is a process of transforming usually positive aspect or improving which may be physical, social or psychological. If growth happens in size than development improves in the level of functioning. Growth focuses on the process of growing and indicates an increase in value but development may mean a kind of improvement and a process of gradual transformation.

Based on these four concepts, educator, education, growth and development, I proceed to analyze the ALFP 2014 program through a qualitative methodology of using multiple case studies. Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studies holistically.<sup>7</sup> Creswell<sup>8</sup> describes that the process of data collection in case studies occurs over a sustained period of time. For me, the programs and itineraries of the ALFP 2014 provided me ample opportunity to reflect as a global and critical educator. I would discuss several case studies which I underwent during my stay in Japan for the ALFP 2014 program and through my collaborative projects with National Institute of Research Japan and several universities around Tokyo.

### **Case Study 1**

Murata Mami is an officer with the Tachiarai local government. She has been working there for 22 years. Though Tachiarai used to be a local normal farm area which people used to drive through, Murata Mami has a great success story of how she and her team of local government officials with the complete support of the Mayor managed to educate the local community to feel proud and dignified of their vocation as farmers and look at themselves as “New Public.” It was not simple task. It was not accomplished in a short term. It was not education in the classroom but lots of dialoguing through communal support and local community activities. Their formal and informal activities through brainstorming, forums and lectures led to development such as selling vegetables on-line, creating 1-Day Cafe and handling the Sakura market which is a mobile market managed by the local community with the support of the Tachiarai local government.

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<sup>7</sup> Gary Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study: A Guide for Students and Researchers*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, (London: Sage, 2009).



Figure 1: Items made by the local community for the Sakura market.

The growth and development of the local community here involved the process of empowering the local community to take charge of their own lives, helping them to activate their creativity and indulge in activities that make them feel useful, responsible and dignified. It was such a joy to see the local senior women cooking a nice lunch for us and how delighted they were to pack *onigiri* (rice balls) for us to take back. They were very happy preparing the meal as a team and we felt honored to be served by such respectful citizens of the local community. Even the Mayor joined us for lunch in spite of his hectic and busy schedule. It all goes without saying how communal support can help in the growth and development of the local community.



Figure 2: Food prepared by the local senior women with lots of care and love.

The improved farming is also another success story where through empowerment and self-independence, several women of Tachiarai have succeeded in growing good vegetables such as lettuces and super peanuts. These women are encouraged to discuss among themselves ways to improve their farming skills. The Tachiarai local government also helps them sell their produce through on-line marketing. The latest success story is when the Mayor signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Singapore to have their produce flown to Singapore restaurants. This sort of creative activities provided kind of informal education to the local farmers in Tachiarai and inspired them to take their vocation passionately.

When we visited the farms, the women farmers proudly showed their farming produce such as lettuce and peanut. They were explaining thoroughly how they went about multitasking, between their role as a house wife, preparing meals for the family and then spending about six to eight hours in the farm. This was such a challenging task which the women of Tachiarai shouldered proudly. We met only the women and when one of my colleagues asked where their husbands were, they responded that they were doing work at home. We did see some men clearing plots of land using the tractor. As for their children, if they are around, they usually come and give a helping hand during the weekends.



Figure 3: A farmer showing her peanut farm which is almost ready to harvest.

Lessons learnt from this experience:

- Learning can start from grassroots.
- Empowerment creates excitement and creativity.
- Communal effort can pay off in positive outcomes.

- Local community needs continuous moral support from local government.
- Growth and development can go on spite of current challenges with appropriate strategies and practical ways to execute the ideas shared by grassroots and administrator.

## Case Study 2

One of our own fellows of the ALFP 2014 from Japan asked if anyone of us would be interested to participate in a *mikoshi* procession. Five of us took up the offer and participated in the *mikoshi* event. It was such an eye opener for me as it was a typical neighborhood event, solely organized and executed by the local community with the support of the local community heads and the Member of Parliament who came to open ceremony the event.

*Mikoshi* in Japan is a divine palanquin (some translate as portable Shinto shrine). Shinto followers believe that it serves as the vehicle to transport a deity in Japan while moving between main shrine and temporary shrine during a festival or when moving to a new shrine. In our case, the *mikoshi* was involving a neighborhood *matsuri* (Japanese festival) and the people involved in bearing the *mikoshi* were all neighborhood individuals who knew each other. They roped in friends to make the event merrier and give a helping hand in bearing the *mikoshi*. That's how our Japanese friend roped us in, through her contacts with the local community leaders.



Figure 4: The *mikoshi* that we shouldered from 3pm to 8pm.

What is astonishing about the whole *matsuri* is the local community worked together as one big family to celebrate the event. They donated for the cause and everyone in the neighborhood chipped in financial support, time, space and energy to make the event a success. It

is amazing how in current changing times, traditional norms and cultures are still maintained in a modernized Japan.

But what is more amazing is such a *matsuri* is exposed to Japanese children from a young age. They have their own *kodomo* (child) *mikoshi* which is treated exactly like an adult mikoshi. Children with the aid and guidance of adults shoulder the *mikoshi* with great care and attention. They do exactly what the adults do, such as singing, shaking the *mikoshi* side to side and following strictly to the road regulations.

The more amazing factor is this future generation of Japan is also trained in other duties and responsibilities. For example, there were children parading in kimono, some were lines person, guiding the traffic with help from adults and some were leading the mikoshi. It was such a wonderful sight to see. Generally most people would think it's cute and nice to see the children shouldering the *mikoshi*. For me personally, it is a great way to inculcate values and cultural norms in the young Japanese children through experiential learning.

Children were empowered to carry the *mikoshi* but not just for fun or merriment. Within the fun and merriment, they were also given the responsibility to guide others, keep track of where the *mikoshi* is heading and so forth. Carrying the *mikoshi* for the children is important because it serves as a tool to hand down the traditional customs of festivals to future generations.

The whole process of the *mikoshi* is inclusive of religious and communal. As I researched more on carrying a mikoshi I found out that it symbolizes how people share the difficulties, hardships, richness and happiness of their lives. Historically, Japanese people were not encouraged or even allowed to live life on their own because they had to work together. They needed some sort of activity to strengthen their social ties and at the same time allowed them to release tension or have some self-expression.

Thus, festivals like carrying the *mikoshi* gave them the privilege to release tension and bond together as well as hope and pray for good harvests of their farming; rice etc. According to a written source, "An English Dictionary of Japanese Culture," festivals in Japan originated from ancient rites related to agriculture and the spiritual well-being of individuals and local communities. Religious rites are performed with ceremonious formalities. However, festivals following them are energetic performances free from strict rules. However, based on my observation, the *mikoshi* bearers and the community walking along with them behave very ethically to safeguard their community dignity; *jinkaku* (which is formed through individuals' attempts to obey their conscience and follow the correct way as human beings).

Though the offering at the *mikoshi* is still rice and other farming produce, people in cities have such festivals in order to get rid of the stresses of their lives, to hope and pray and give thanks for their health, and peace and respect to the gods as their ancestors had done in olden days. They also have festivals to enjoy and have a break from their busy schedule.

Another very important aspect of *mikoshi* that should be highlighted here was how the chief person in-charge of stopping and starting off the carrying of *mikoshi* laid full trust in his team of people. Because the *mikoshi* is on the move from street to street for a long, long time, there were times when a break was taken in spite of continuous changing of *mikoshi* bearers during the procession.

I only noticed the trust put upon by the chief when I was asked to be the front bearer of the *mikoshi*. Because of the quick team work that everyone got to carry the *mikoshi* simultaneously, the chief will just drop his body backward and his whole team is ready to catch him as the *mikoshi* bearers lift the *mikoshi* and shoulder it in a split second. It is such a splendid act of responsibility, teamwork and total trustworthiness.



Figure 5: People getting ready to catch the chief as he drops backward.

Towards the end, after the *mikoshi* is placed where it is supposed to be, people share their happiness by drinking sake, beer or juice. They go home happily with feelings that they strengthened their relationship with others and made a better community.

Lessons learnt from this experience:

- Culture and traditions develop morality and *jinkaku* personality.
- Japanese society passes down morality and *jinkaku* through experiential learning.

- Japanese people participate in festivals even if individuals follow different religions or have different principles.
- Identity of Japanese culture will not be lost or forgotten.
- The feelings of community solidarity and socialization among individuals keep growing and developing in generations to come.

### Case Study 3

During the personal activity week, I had the opportunity to go to an elementary school which was having their open day on October 9, 2014. It is Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School which is in the Chiba Prefecture. There are about 750 students of both genders from Year One to Year Six. The school also has several classes for special education children. It is a city run or comes under the category of a public school. The principal is Mr. Asami Yukihiro and he together with his team of educators has made the school popular through the aspects of student-centered teaching and learning and encouraging collaborative teaching and learning. On October 9, the open day was for all the elementary teachers from the Chiba Prefecture to come and experience the teaching and learning culture in Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School. My friend, Ms. Nishino Mayumi, who is a senior researcher at the Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, Science and Technology (MEXT) was invited for the special occasion and she invited me as her co-researcher.



Figure 6: Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School entrance.

Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School is just like any other public elementary school in Japan and having their annual open day. But what was unique about this year is 500 teachers from different elementary schools in Chiba Prefecture came there to observe and learn the dialoguing method conducted in the school. Time during the teaching and learning process was spent on developing habits of critical thinking through discussion methods and direct concern with their own daily lives, their projects, their friends in school and their neighborhood.

In fact before we entered to observe classes, we realized that all the signage, the ushering and registration was completely managed by the parents whose children studied there. There was a very strong collaboration between the community (parents) and the school administrator and teachers in conducting activities for the school

The first element that I would like to highlight from this visit is the power sharing between teachers and students. In a nation where the *sensei* (teacher) is considered the superior as ancient history of Confucianism has created a hierarchy and such elements of traditional teaching and learning still exist in Eastern countries, this elementary school broke through such culture and teacher became part of the teaching and learning process. For classes where there was discussion about a certain project or preparing a certain activity, teacher sat together with the students and at the same level. The teacher became part of the class. Students are given the authority to be the chairperson and committee members. The lesson was conducted in a dialogical manner and students were encouraged to ask questions, give suggestions and evaluate other's ideas.

Lessons are normally started with all the committee for the day taking their places, including the teacher. Then the committee introduces themselves, followed by the agenda of the activity. The chairperson encourages students from the floor to participate in the discussions. From time to time, teacher will reinforce elements of importance to the students. A lot of learning takes place as students are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Students go through experiential learning and if there is a need to make decisions, the chair person would take a vote.

Another fascinating element that I observed in this school was the active role and responsibility that the dietician and the health nurse played in conducting lessons in class. According to my friend, Ms. Nishino, almost every school in Japan has a dietician and a health nurse. However, the role that they take up varies. In most schools, mass classes with saturated information are disseminated to all the students about health and food that students should and should not consume as well as what life style they should follow. It is mostly top-down information and in a one-way teaching style.

But in Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School, the dietician and the health nurse enters every class where their expertise is needed and teach along with the class teacher. What a

surprise! And another special feature is simple surveys are conducted within the class before the lesson to identify eating or sleeping habits and other topics that has a direct link with what is going to be taught for the day. For example in the topic of eating a balance diet, students were surveyed on what their *bento* (lunch box) contains and the results were tabulated in a bar graph. This was amazing because as the lesson proceeds, students will come to awareness as whether they are eating a balanced diet or vice versa. They don't need to be told what to eat and vice versa but deep learning takes place naturally.

The lesson itself in the classroom is very interesting. When it comes to pedagogical matters such as getting into groups or making a presentation, or even telling a story, class teacher takes charge. However when it is content, the content experts who are the dieticians or the health nurse will do the explanation and conduct the lesson. I have never seen this kind of collaborative teaching which gives space for students to enjoy different styles of teaching and brings the best out of the different parties, class teacher and content experts.

In one class that I observed, teacher starts the lesson by talking about the survey they conducted on who eats what (self-reflection session). Teacher tells a story about two boys who ate different types of food and how one was healthy and the other not. Then the dietician takes over by explaining the different types of food important for the human body. She adds humor to the lesson to excite and keep the students interested.

In another class, the lesson was about taking care of your bones and dietician spoke on the different aspects of why it is important to take care of your bones and types of food that is important to make their bones strong and healthy. They conducted a survey on what they ate and drank to keep their bones healthy and later discussed on types of food and drinks that was important for healthy bones; indirectly focusing on healthy lifestyle.

Another unique feature of this school is inclusion of special education children as their students. I observed two classes where students of special education were small in numbers and they had four teachers per class. The first class I observed was a class which was getting ready to go for a field trip. Teachers gave the students hands on experience on how to pack and unpack their personal belongings. They were asked to do several times, folding towels, putting clothes into plastic bags then into school bags and the students were having a good time even before going for the trip.

In another class which also consisted of special education children, teachers played a very catchy song and sang and danced with their students. The song was very long but it had so many different animal characters in it where students can do many actions which the teachers were teaching in a fun manner. While having fun, students were stretching and making the blood circulation flow in their body which is important for them. They were also building a strong bond with their teachers and friends.



Figure 7: Teacher shows how to fold towel while another student practice packing his bag.

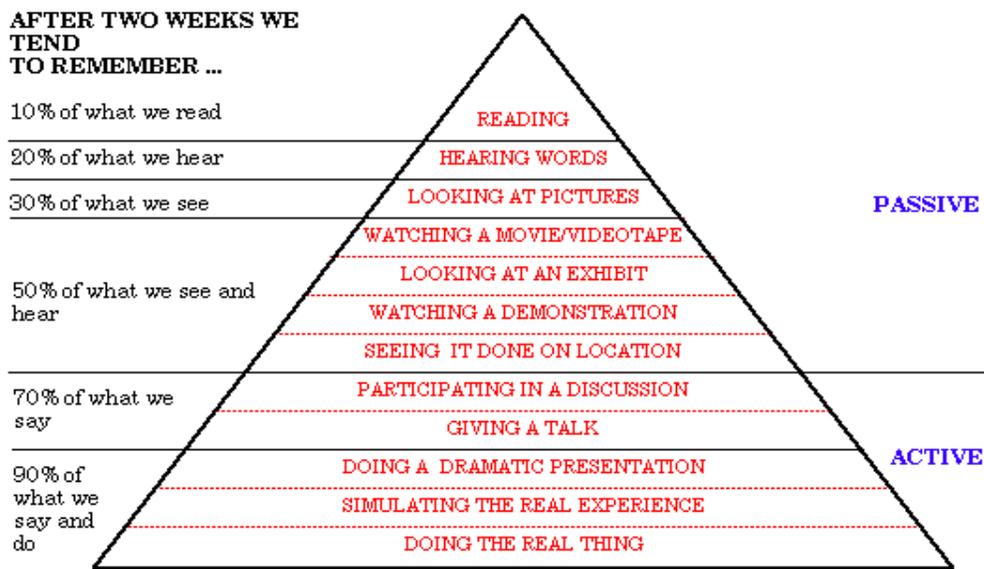
From my experience to the elementary school, a lot can be learnt about the education system in Japan and how the administrators of schools can make a difference if they are more innovative and creative in developing students to be proactive and take charge of their own learning with facilitation from their teachers and content experts.

Lessons learnt from this experience:

- Formal learning in Japanese elementary schools are holistic and meaningful.
- Students are given responsibilities in school activities which make them develop into good citizens of the nation.
- There is a fair share of empowerment between teachers and students which is managed with mutual respect.
- Teaching and learning is conducted in a fun way which eliminates boredom and discipline problems.
- Students are taught through experiential learning and active learning which leaves a deep effect on their schooling experiences.
- Inclusive education is practiced to its utmost in Japan.
- Active learning is the essence of primary education.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> What Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School was implementing was active learning which means 90% of what the students did and experienced would be remembered and practiced in their daily lives. It provides a good foundation for their development and growth as the future generations of the Japanese nation.



Adapted from: Edgar Dale *Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Figure 8: The active learning pyramid.

In fact the elementary students were given a startling head start for linking real-life like eating healthy diet and taking care of one self. However, my experience lecturing in several universities finds that the active learning slowly diminishes as the Japanese students become more passive as they grow and move into tertiary education. It is a factor that needs research and development as it might hinder the younger generation from playing a proactive role in the nation's development and growth.

#### Case Study 4

The Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, Science and Technology (MEXT) is the ministry who sees to the overall growth and development of education in Japan. I was invited to share my research proposal on "Equipping 21st Century Educators with Appropriate Skills and Values." It was held in the curriculum division of MEXT and was attended by five senior research officers. It was a good in-depth sharing and plenty of questions were asked as the Japanese senior researchers are in the mid of revamping, evaluating, researching suitable curriculum for junior and high school students to cater for the 21<sup>st</sup> needs and aspirations; locally and globally. They themselves are great scholars and researchers in their own field but were very keen to listen and learn from a humanistic researcher.

It was an eye opener for me as more questions were asked, I realize that we shared many issues in common such as the need to make teachers acquire Higher Order Thinking Skills

(HOTS), to encourage student centered teaching even in high school and universities, to resolve issues of a very centralized (top down) policy that both Malaysia and Japan have acquired, especially in the Ministry of Education. Japan was also going through transformation in education and the education researchers were facing similar issues like other nations as to what subjects should be emphasized, should there be a balance between science and humanities subjects, how can teachers be trained to be more effective in the teaching and learning process and many more.

One resolution made was to create more collaborative research and visit each other in Japan, Malaysia and New Zealand where I will be situated the next two years to be a post-doctoral scholar. For this aspect I found that MEX invested highly on encouraging their research officers to visit different nations and share ideas of transformation in education suitable for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and ahead.

Lessons learnt from this experience:

- Research for the betterment of education is given priority in Japan.
- Researchers in MEX are sent to different prefectures and different countries to gain knowledge and experience to improve the Japanese education system.
- Educational researchers in MEX are open-minded and accept ideas from local and international educators for the purpose of improving the education system.
- Collaborative research is encouraged at micro and macro level for the benefit of education and mankind.



Figure 9: Visha with five senior researchers of Ministry of Education, Sports, Culture, Science and Technology (MEXT).

I basically focused on the above case studies to emphasize on the need for developing a dynamic group of global 21<sup>st</sup> century educators who are able to think globally but take action locally based on local needs and aspirations. But why so much importance is prioritized on 21<sup>st</sup> century educators?

### **Why Focus on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educators?**

With the current explosion of knowledge virtually there is a great need for paradigm change in which education and educators are perceived. If an educator thinks his or her vocation is to fill empty vessel (Freire, 1983), then it is quite unsuitable for current times. If one thinks a certain language is sufficient to ensure the growth and development of oneself and one nation, then there might be issues as we are now a borderless society with essence of multiculturalism creeping into every corner of the universe. It is quite difficult to find only one ethnic group in any parts of the world as individuals. Individuals and groups of individuals are actively going from one place to another and my personal vision is to get across to educators to put across to students about “Think Global, Act Local” notion.

Thus, there is the need for 21<sup>st</sup> century educators to focus on notions of how they are going to education their learners in any formal or informal setting to connect with current transformation and engage in a world of diversity. The Nuclear Energy Policy and the field trip to Nagasaki Museum provided the ALFP 2014 fellows about the need to educate future generations about using nuclear energy sustainably and with learning from Japan’s misfortune during World War II. One needs to experience what it is to undergo a nuclear war and its effects or see its consequences after years of the war. An educator who is creative would be able to bring reality into the classroom to create awareness of such issues.

When I took part in the bearing of the *mikoshi*, I felt very comfortable with the rituals and different activities conducted throughout the whole procession as I was trying to understand and looking at the rituals from the eyes of the local perspective. But for some individuals who are not exposed to diversity in culture who cannot see from others perspective, the cultural and rituals might be seen differently. For example the serving of sake, the dress code for carrying the *mikoshi* might be seen as a taboo for some cultures. But as my Maori friend who is a community leader in New Zealand said when he was agitated with some people from my country who took part in a Maori welcome ceremony but refused to do the “nose rub,” “When you are in Rome do what the Romans do.” Of course there is some truth in what he said. But if such actions are considered taboo in one’s belief and religion then other parties got to understand and respect both parties.

Being an educator in different levels of education, and after being nearly three decades in the same field, I find the most essential matter to be discussed and further improved is the quality and quantity of educators for human development. When I bring up the issue about educators, there are two types of educators that I would like to focus. Firstly are the formal educators who choose teaching as their vocation. They include preschool educators, primary and secondary school educators, college and university lectures and all those who deliver knowledge in a formal setting called school or educational institutions. This will be the second case study that I discussed earlier about the elementary school in Chiba where teachers educate their students based on their local need and interest.

The second group of educators are all those involved informally in the growth and development of individuals. Even though their roles are informal, the impact is greater than those teaching formally in educational institutions. These category of individuals include parents who nurture their children from birth before passing them on for formal education to educators, religious leaders who provide spiritual and religious ritual knowledge for nations who adhere to religious strength and knowledge, political leaders who construct or destroy a nation which their vision and nation building agenda, on governmental organizations who inject a sense of social and moral responsibility among communities and nations at local and international level. The list simply goes on and it will practically cover every individual who lives in a society. As an ancient African proverb goes, "It takes a village to educate a child."

Here, the good example would be the project conducted by Murata Mami and the Tachiarai local council to educate and bring about a "New Public" among the local community. In fact I personally believe that education is lifelong. There is no end to educating individuals or group of communities. As we experienced the visit to Fukuoka Center on Helping People to Work in their 70s is a good example of lifelong learning. This group of community is learning to cope with their capability to work. The local council individuals strategized many activities for people above 70 years of age due to the rationale that (1) there is a change of the social structure and (2) many aged people are healthy and active even at the age of 70. Their policy was to optimize the opportunity for those above 70 years of age to work or participate in society according to one's own will and ability regardless of one's age. In the Asian and global context, Japan can be a good example of how senior people are provided the opportunity to play active roles in the society



Figure 10: Growth and development for aging society is a lifelong process.

Based on my two categories of educators, I would want to focus on issues of 21<sup>st</sup> educators in current times. I am not generalizing that all educators have changed in this 21<sup>st</sup> century but the drive for focusing on product and which is not balanced with process which humanities is more concerned with is slowly deteriorating in current times. I have trained hundreds of educators-to-be and given in-house training to those teaching humanity subjects such as Moral Education. I find their moral very low and they have nothing much to say other than complain about the system, how terrible nowadays students are and how frustrated they have become. I find my students in the university who are going to be future educators very enthusiastic about their career. But after several years being in schools, they become like my in-house training educators, complaining practically about anything and everything in their profession.

### Issues among 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educators

I would like to bring forward and discuss these issues which might be similar or different in many Asian nations, where growth and development of educators locally and globally are concerned.

#### *Pleasure versus Pressure*

Firstly is choosing a career as an educator might be by choice or vice versa. For those who choose the profession as their last resort, it becomes a burden not only for the educators but also for the students who need to put up with an individual who chose a vocation for the sake of

earning a living. Such scenarios are familiar in certain nations and as a result, many students are suffering due to the “no passion for vocation” syndrome.

### ***Objective of Teaching and Learning***

How do educators locate themselves in a society, community and a nation or even as a global citizen? Many educators tend to resort to traditional moods of teaching and confine themselves to themselves, their educational institutions and their own academic world. Students or the current Gen-Y have the whole world at the end of their fingers. Thanks to Internet and social network. There is definitely a gap between what educators are disseminating and what students are expecting. If a 21<sup>st</sup> century educator thinks that his or her responsibility is only to part knowledge than the whole education system needs to be evaluated.

Students can obtain information through various sources. In a current research conducted in the whole of Malaysia where I was asked for expert advice on future of social science subjects, it was founded that more than 70% of secondary school students used Internet to outsource information for their subject matter. Thus, if students are already able to outsource content matter, what is the role of an educator? Pedagogies of teaching of current times vary from traditional pedagogies. Of course “Old is Gold” and certain pedagogies like using stories or songs never go out of time. Whenever I go and give talks or seminars, the moment I play a song or start with a story, all participants would be listening attentively or singing along joyfully.<sup>10</sup>

These are some evergreen pedagogy. But “chalk and talk” or “one way lecture” is not very popular nowadays. So how can this issue be resolved especially when students have all the technological gadgets with them and the moment lectures or lessons are no more engaging, they switch off and on their gadgets. The educator should formulate their own objectives every time they face their students and proceed into the process of education. When we attended the session on Tea Ceremony by Dr. Sen Genshitsu (Soshitsu), who was the Urasenke iemoto for thirty-eight years, he explained his goal of imparting harmony, respect, purity and tranquility through a Bowl of Tea for the attainment of genuine world peace and happiness, which is the mutual and ultimate goal of all growth and development within humanity.

### **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)**

As the world becomes borderless, thanks again to technology and the Internet, students are becoming more alert about their rights and sometimes do ignore their responsibilities. At the same time, educators especially those who find it hard to adapt to current needs of education and can't possibly change their mindsets that students might have more information than the

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<sup>10</sup> This was the case when I was provided the opportunity to present a public lecture at Kyorin University in Hachioji. Students who hardly spoke English were singing and laughing because they enjoyed the music that was close to them.

educators need some serious paradigm shift. If it does not take place then disaster occurs as the knowledge transfer that educator assumes does not take place and students find educators and schools a waste of time.

What can be done? How can engaging and meaningful education take over from current passive learning? One good example was the way Professor Suzuki Tatsujiro and his team delivered nuclear energy policy issues in Japan after the 3/11 Fukushima nuclear accident. Awareness was created through reaching out to society and having students exchange from Nagasaki University to other universities around the world.

### ***Research Minded***

All educators are encouraged to be analytical and research minded. They have been trained and constantly reminded to plan and execute action research in order to improve and accelerate the teaching and learning process in the classroom and co-curricular activities outside the classroom. However, educators focus is always to ensure that students excel in their academic performance and sad to say not much effort into the holistic growth of the students.

What can be done to encourage educators and students to work hand in hand to become more excellent in all aspects of life so that students who leave school and become employers or entrepreneurs are able to portray an overall development of holistic human being? When Mr. Okamura Hyoue and Mr. Edward Sumoto presented their talks on multiculturalism in Japan and mix roots Japan, I realized that educators can play an important role in including the *hafu* (mix root) community as their mainstream and not see them as individuals who are different because they do not have physical look alike. Other than individuals like Mr. Okamura and Mr. Sumoto, educators can help in bridging the differences. In certain nations, they have a Minister for Minority Ethnic who initiates activities to include all communities in different festivals, implement projects to build an integrated, multicultural nation. In my opinion, inclusion of both mainstream and *hafu* communities would be a more positive and proactive way of building a multicultural Japan for the future.

### ***Education Starts at Home***

Parents are the foremost first educators of children who they bring into the world. Without proper guidance and basic foundation for value based life style, it would be difficult for educators in formal setting to continue or even start their education role and responsibility. Children from homes where parents are their first positive role model and value inspirers will usually have no problem coping with growing crisis unless they are strongly influenced by negative peer influence.

However, students who have a strong value based foundation from young usually know what is right and what is wrong by the time they are in secondary school. They will know how to say “NO” to negative peer influence. The alarming fear is many of the students in secondary schools who have identity crisis or have been involved with social ills are usually from broken homes.

### ***Role of NGO in Educating Communities and Individuals***

Non-governmental organizations (NGO) have been the backbone to many nations for growth and development. While the government of each nation plans and executes projects and policies for the betterment of each nation and the global community, NGOs are busy with their agenda to improve the lives of individuals in hardship and poverty, sustaining the environment and some NGOs are firm “check and balance” of the government of the day. It is important that each NGO that is formed are able to envision their goals and objectives. Many a times, NGOs start with a straight motive which is likened by society but as years go by and leadership changes, such roles are no more educative but more self or group fulfilling. These is where mishaps take place and there is a need to look into roles of NGOs and how they educate communities and individuals for the betterment of human and nature.

Education is life-long. Every individual born to this world would have been educated in some way or other. Without some structure and sound education, individuals can become disoriented and easily influenced by external factors. How can such issues be dealt with. I strongly feel for the need that every individual in every nation has the right to be educated and not indoctrinated. Education should come in with autonomy.

Certain nations only allow certain type of ideologies to be accepted in their nation. It becomes a disaster when other individuals with other ideologies come in contact with such individuals. The weaker of the two is influenced and if it's for the better than the nation and the global world gains. However, if the weaker of the individual is influenced and is lured into negative and extreme actions such as hooliganism, suicide bombing, conferring to religious and social cults, then how can education help to ensure that individuals have an opportunity to sieve the proper values in life to ensure that they, their families and their nation have the safe environment just as other individuals, other families, other communities and other nations.

### **Way Forward**

Changing mindsets of individuals for the betterment of the global nations can only happen through education. I am a strong believer of teaching individuals from the heart. When a mother is carrying a baby, the physician always ensures that the heartbeat of the fetus and mother is stable and normal. At the same time, when an individual is leaving the earthly world, physicians

confirm that he or she is dead when there is no more heartbeat. Thus to educate one from the heart is the most essential role and responsibility of each and every one.

I find that most countries are investing tones on education especially Asian countries. It is a good sign but it also chills me as a holistic education is more important than just grades and a nation with great scholars but without hearts is like a nation with robots or zombies walking around. What I mean is development and growth is always calculated based on the nation's income and how developed the infrastructure are but hardly a time when morality or ethics of society is ever measured where development of nation is concerned. When Socrates spoke about morals and ethics, he clearly stated that it was no small matter but matters of the nation. Until today great nations have fallen apart due to the unethical deeds of their leadership.

I for one am strongly proposing that development and growth in all aspects should be balanced with strong spiritual and ethical foundations. Based on my own experience in Malaysia and several parts of the world, I find leaders without strong hold on spiritual and ethics becoming the victims of materialistic greed and that is causing the whole nation and also other nations to suffer. One single decision of taking bribe or misleading the nation with wrong information can cause generations to suffer.

Growth and development takes place interchangeably and it can happen in any situation, formal, informal, authentic or set up. Educators and learners are also interchangeable. When I was in Tachiarai, the local community was my educator but when I shared my knowledge with the senior researchers in MEXT the tables changed and I also learnt from their experiences and their ideas which were shared with all.

Education is a lifelong process. Growth and development is part and puzzle of that process. When students in Year Six, Yachiyo-Shiritsu Owada Elementary School could not come to a conclusion on how they can cheer up or have friendship programs with Year One students, the teacher explained that even though they could not come to an agreement, they learnt other skills like give and take, being tolerable and showing respect for the other. They were asked to go home reflect and come with a solution the next day. That is what education does in a world rapidly growing and developing. At times when things move smoothly, educators rejoice with students but when things turn otherwise, educators also need to make students reflect and learn from the process. Educators need to acquire such skills and wisdom for the betterment of their students and mankind.

So the moral of this whole discussion is education is the root to growth and development and one needs to be lifelong learner, irrelevant of physical age, position in society, gender ethnicity, culture and all. Everyone in a nation is an educator in their own rights. Rejuvenating oneself from time to time with latest educational theories and improving one's pedagogical skills encourages growth and development. Education is the way forward for all growth and

development. Education can be formal or informal. Education needs to touch the lives of individuals to bring about a positive change. Education should encourage critical and creative thinking. Education should create space and opportunities for humanities to develop without boundaries. Education should not encourage extremism or narrow mindedness. Education should develop the hunger for skills, global universal values and multicultural experiences. Education should be seen as a process more than a product. Education should develop educators who are passionate about their profession and yearn to develop individuals who are sincere honest and filled with integrity. Education should challenge issues or problems in everyday life to ensure that individuals are holistic in nature and do not depend on artificial solutions to face life challenges Education should be an ongoing process and the future of growth and development of humanities should be on going every second.