

Human Rights Education at the Digital/Global Age

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BASED ON THE INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION of human rights, how can human rights education be universal in character? How can such type of education be translated into concrete programs?

Nature and Scope of Human Rights Education

Human rights education should be able to adapt to the different dynamics in society. This adaptation to the societal situation can consist of several components.

First, human rights education must embrace intercultural education in a globalizing world. Intercultural education is education based on interculturalism, a new political ideology which has been taking over multiculturalism recently.¹

In my interpretation, interculturalism is a political ideology for managing cultural and religious diversity by explicitly addressing the de-facto inequality from the perspective of each ethnic master-narrative in the given society and ensuring all parties equal participation in the process of making the new collective identity.

Second, human rights education must be culturally sensitive, meaning, it must be attentive and respectful of individual cultures, especially those of the marginalized and oppressed people. In this connection, human rights education must take sentimental education seriously as it arguably facilitates and expands a sense of equality among human beings as Richard Rorty stressed.²

Third, human rights education must take into account the rapidly changing social/political/economic structure of societies and nurture individual mind-set, reframed by the recent development of science and technologies as the major engines of globalization. This new development is coined as “the information age”, where knowledge-production and information-processing have become part of the mainstream society.³

The recent developments of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) are transforming the landscape of the media industry and the resulting commercialization, politicization and globalization are posing the most serious challenge to the ethics of the media.

Human rights education must address this issue squarely. In this regard, ICT and other sciences and technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Big Data Technology and Robotics should be utilized to promote human rights education.

Fourth, human rights education must also take into account the multilingualization in the world.

For instance, English, a language spoken by 1.75 billion people worldwide (and expected to be two billion by 2020), has been radically multilingualized as much as localized.⁴ The view that there is one standard English in the world has been challenged.

Human rights education must aim at transforming societies and organizations from a homogeneity paradigm to a diversity paradigm⁵ and at reeducating monolingual English speakers who have no insight about the multicultural challenges to their English. In this regard, multilingual education must be a part of human rights education.

In summary, intercultural education, sentimental education, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education and multilingual education must be parts of human rights education.

Language Matters: Challenge for Human Rights Education in Japan

Lam Peng-Er contends that:⁶

While the Japanese state is relatively liberal, Japanese society is not. Japanese state and society are unlikely to accept the notion that a democratic Japan should embrace distinct, autonomous, and equal Okinawan and Ainu nations within a multicultural country.

Peng-Er highlights the Japanese myth of its ethnic homogeneity and strong group orientation as obstacles and concludes that Japanese society is illiberal in the sense that a majority believes that assimilation is the best approach for foreigners and minorities.⁷

I basically agree with his analysis with one reservation: any society can change. As Peng-Er anticipated, the one-party dominant system in Japan has finally broken down, following Italy, Sweden, Mexico, India and Taiwan.

The major challenge for the Japanese society is the psychological block against foreign languages/cultures which holds back most of Japanese people from embracing different “others.”

As an ordinary Japanese student, I have also experienced many difficulties in a multinational environment. When I worked for the United Nations Development Programme in New York during the 1992-1994 period, I suffered serious culture shock in the multicultural working environment.

In my account, the initial and major block for most of Japanese people in adapting to the multicultural and multilingual environment is their low self-esteem and self-confidence, which is implanted and becomes a second-nature through their entire school days. As a result, most Japanese including myself tend to be afraid of making mistakes in public and become very nervous when they face and need to speak in foreign languages, particularly English.

There are several remedies for overcoming this mental barrier. Exposing to multilingual environment under very safe and secured conditions is one of the most effective ways, in which we naturally learn that languages are equal and English is not a special language. What we need to keep in mind in this practice is developing and maintaining joyful and relaxed safe space in which no one feels scared making mistakes or simply expressing his/her own feelings and thoughts. Non-judgmental, affirmative and mutually trusted community is the prerequisite for learning new language. In this regard, coaching exercise and mindfulness meditation could be utilized in making such a mind-set.

Once they overcome psychological difficulty and establish mutual trust in their learning group, we could move on to the next stage, cultivating and nurturing each student's motivation.

Young people in the digital age have become very diversified and individuated in interests and desires; a reality we need to accept and respect. So, it is important to facilitate and stimulate spontaneous curiosity through extensive reading and writing, following their own choices and to encourage each student to set own goal for which they need to master a particular foreign language. We, of course, should use proper audio-visual materials in making foreign languages more familiar for students. I use on-line

learning material, “model diplomacy,” developed by the Council on Foreign Relations,⁸ which is designed for participatory and flexible learning.⁹

I also use on-line conference system for organizing hybrid joint lecture with students/teachers in different parts of the world which helps students develop a natural sense of curiosity on foreign affairs and the people there.

Under the model diplomacy format, the students are assigned roles to play in a simulation of a “National Security Council” meeting. The students are oriented on the process of the “National Security Council” meeting. They do research and prepare materials to support their discussion in the meeting according to their assigned role. The role-play comprises three rounds:¹⁰

In round 1, students briefly explain their positions, summarizing their position memos. Round 2 is an open deliberation in which students argue for or against others’ positions while defending, and perhaps adapting, their own. In round 3, students state their final policy recommendations, ideally demonstrating an ability to compromise and take into account the positions presented in the preceding rounds. Finally, the president announces a policy decision. This announcement may occur at the end of the role-play or in a subsequent class session.

The teacher asks questions to the students to wrap up the role play:¹¹

Students should shed their assigned roles and discuss their personal perspectives on the simulation experience, the policy debate, and the final direction. After wrapping up, assign all students the section 4 policy review memo, which they will use to reflect on the NSC process, the case, and the deliberation. This should come from their personal perspective, not their assigned role.

I also use on-line conference system for organizing hybrid joint lecture with students/teachers in different parts of the world which helps students to develop a natural sense of curiosity on foreign affairs and people in other countries.

Finally, as the saying goes, seeing is believing, we have to develop multilingual, multicultural and multi-faith community in Japan. For this end, it is crucial to develop proper rules and regulations on the arrival of non-Japanese to the country that subscribe to respect for different languages, cultures and faiths.

Experimental Human Rights Education

I started teaching at Shokei Gakuin University in 2010 and immediately found that most of students had no experience of talking to and even meeting foreigners during their college life.

I asked all the students enrolled in my class, “Introduction to Global Studies”, to participate in the Sendai Global Festa, an annual international gathering, as volunteers. I also invited practitioners working in the international field as guest speakers in my class.

However, although their global lectures impressed my students, they often tended to take it as fire on the opposite shore. Only those who went abroad under the fieldtrip or exchange program gained some global perspective, their number was very limited and had small impact on others.

I also learned that most of the students already lost their natural interest in and even developed a sense of hatred against foreign languages, particularly English during their school days.

In 2013, I happened to meet the members of Hippo Family Club at the Sendai Global Festa and remembered how joyfully they acquired foreign languages and considered their method useful for my class.

The LEX Institute – Hippo Family Club (the Institute for Language Experience, Experiment and Exchange) is a non-profit corporation founded in 1981. Based on the theme “Scientifically exploring humans and languages,” it aims at natural acquisition of several languages (multiple languages) regardless of age through (1) community-based activities known as “Families;” (2) opportunities to meet with people from all over the world through “international exchanges;” and (3) “research activities” exploring languages through natural science.¹² There are presently about 20,000 members participating in “Families” in approximately seven hundred locations throughout Japan with members consisting of the very young (babies) to the very old (99 years old).

First trial

After an initial lecture by the Hippo Family Club member in the spring of 2014, I introduced the multilingual language acquisition program of the Hippo Family Club (Hippo) at Shokei Gakuin University as a formal curriculum for the first time in the history of Japanese higher education institutions in the spring of 2015.

Students enjoyed multilingual games and repeating recorded multilingual stories together and shared their insights.

There are many multilingual games, named SADA, created by Hippo members designed for participants to enjoy together through body-movement and dance in which students naturally learn that language is not monologue and verbal but holistic and bodily oral dialogue.

Multilingual stories are well scripted, one of which describes a history of friendship among young friends from USA, Korea, Japan, Singapore and Mexico and recorded in different languages so that students could guess what they talk about while listening to the same stories in different languages.



Group activity – Farmer in the dell.



Speaking up in public.

The reactions from the students were beyond expectations:

- My view of foreign languages has changed. I used to hate them because they were difficult and I couldn't understand anything. Now I have a grasp of what is being said and have decided to mimic them for the time being.
- I am surprised that I have begun to grasp the meaning of what is being sung in songs that I didn't understand at all in the beginning.
- I had thoughts about how fun it would be to speak with many people, but this class has convinced me that I have to speak with people from other countries.

In addition to the students' very positive comments, I also learned an extremely valuable insight from one of my faculty members. After listening to my brief explanation about my experimental multilingual class, she instantly commented that it was exactly human rights education as students learn to see any language as equal and eventually recognize every human as equal regardless of their origin, language and culture.

In fact, Yo Sakakibara, a founder of Hippo Family Club, has already discovered this multilingual dynamics:¹³

Any two-way relationship has a tendency toward the absolute, with ample potential for polarization and confrontation. A three-way relationship, on the other hand, is all about relativity; it encourages coexistence, tolerance. And the uncertainty such a relationship triggers in our mind offers us the opportunity to discover new things about ourselves.

For example, suppose we give English-only story tapes to the children in our language program. No matter how much English this exposes them to, it will always be the "other" language for them, as opposed to Japanese.

Now suppose that instead, we give the children story tapes in two or more foreign languages. As they listen to all these languages at once, their preferences fluctuate: "I like this language. No, I like that one!" These fluctuations begin to affect how they view their mother tongue, too.

Second trial

On 15 November 2016, I organized the intercultural hybrid workshop for Japanese and foreign students at Kunori Gakuen High School in Yonezawa



city, Yamagata. The students in the school interacted with students in San Francisco, Tokyo, Chiba and Nagasaki through ZOOM,¹⁴ the latest on-line conference system.

In April 2017, I started a hybrid global education program by using ZOOM. I also introduced “model diplomacy from the Council on Foreign Relations.”

At first, I invited Ms. Aya Terajima, a young English teacher, entrepreneur and a student of Meiji University who launched a revolutionary English education program, to my class through ZOOM. She developed an English education program in which students with English deviation score 30¹⁵ man-



(Top and bottom) Intercultural hybrid workshop for Japanese and foreign students at Kunori Gakuen High School



Joint lectures between Shokei Gakuin University and Hung Kuang University in Taiwan.



The future of nuclear energy policy
Lessons from the Fukushima Nuclear
Power Plant Accident

Hybrid Panel with simultaneous interpretation



Main Venue
 Shirakashi 2 (Room?)
 Sendai International Center
 9:00-10:30 a.m. Nov. 27th (Japan time)

Online English Site
<https://room.us/j/936132498>

オンライン日本語会場
<https://room.us/j/561163516>



aged to improve their English proficiency in half a year and become eligible for universities in the U.S. She delivered a special lecture on how students should study English, focusing on main pitfalls they tend to fall. Her lecture gave students an opportunity to reflect and review their learning method objectively and relieve them of groundless inferiority complex about English.

This time, I also connected our real classroom in the campus with the headquarters of the Hippo Family Club in Tokyo. In the hybrid class, students enjoyed interacting with the young interns from different parts of the world with different mother tongues stationed at the headquarters by

playing multilingual games and repeating recorded multilingual stories. They also shared their insights simultaneously through ZOOM.

I also held joint lectures between Shokei Gakuin University and Hung Kuang University in Taiwan through ZOOM.

On 27 November 2017, I held a special session on the future of nuclear energy policy – lessons from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant Accident at the International Disaster and Risk Conference 2017, Sendai, Japan with a special lecture from a professor in Turkey using ZOOM. He was able to

deliver his speech on-line and joined our discussion, with simultaneous interpretation and shared with both on-line and off-line audience.

Third trial

In 2018, I expanded the human rights education program by introducing two special lectures on languages, one on-line lecture by Ms. Aya Terajima and an off-line one by a Hippo member. The introductory lectures facilitated the interest of students on issues beyond the campus, which I hoped would lead to a sense of global citizenship for which human rights form the ethical foundation.

I also revised my curriculum about “model diplomacy,” developed by the Council on Foreign Relations. This year, I selected two topics, “Global Climate Change” and “North Korea Nuclear Threat,” and asked students to form small groups, choose one of the two topics and discuss the issue in “model diplomacy” format.

Each group made presentation in English at the end of the course.

At the first class, I explained to students that language was a core element of identity and respect to each individual unique identity was the foundation of human rights and the goal of this class was for students to learn working and developing together each unique identity in a collaborative and affirmative environment. In my account, Japanese students are educated to follow teachers and their internal majority group and have a few experiences of facing each other as unique individual because their learning environment forces them to be indifferent to others’ “difference.” It is my firm belief that individual identity could only develop through social interaction in safe and secured community and proper language education provides the most effective opportunity for identity building exercise as group work.¹⁶

In addition to standard multilingual language acquisition program of the Hippo Family Club, I also introduced experimental multilingual class in which students listened to a similar story in several languages and discussed them in groups.

At the end of the course, we organized an on-line panel with Professor Goro Christoph Kimura of Sophia University (Tokyo), Professor Ryoko Matsuzaki of Keimyung University (South Korea) and two Christian foreign missionaries.¹⁷

We all agreed on the importance of being open-minded, learning together and respecting diversity in leaning languages; the same conditions for human rights education.

Some Reflections

This experiment developed based on my experience as a human rights educator, having experimented participatory human rights education method by using expressive arts therapy for the last twelve years as well as the new insights that I obtained recently through exercising LEX multilingual program, coaching¹⁸ and mindfulness program.¹⁹

In our experimental classes, I found that a sense of equality of human beings and open-mindedness could be nurtured through developing emotional awareness of languages as equal and that a multilingual environment under affirmative conditions helps in developing such a sense of open-mindedness and a sense of compassion for the “different” others.²⁰

At the first class, I emphasized to the students who kept quiet on my question and held back from speaking in English that language was not a subject for ranking and dividing students and what you could develop together. Hippo family members always try to look for the positive side in the students’ responses and encourage them to feel relaxed and enjoy classes by demonstrating it as role-model.

We should more seriously consider how language education could and should be incorporated into human rights education. Particularly, multilingual education is yet to be explored scientifically and we need to research and develop a program in order to incorporate it into the formal curriculum in tertiary education.

Then, we need to examine how we can develop a sense of sentiment through on-line program which lacks face-to-face contact that carries body communication as basis of emotion/sentiment.

My preliminary experiment of on-line workshops ascertained the hypothesis that the crowd-based education program could be more effective if equipped properly with necessary technologies.

In order to examine the above hypothesis, we need to develop proper technologies on virtual education program and to examine how and in what setting virtual orality would deepen human compassion in the on-line coaching training session as a test case.

In this connection, we should learn from Minerva University (established in 2012) which fully employs on-line, real-time and synchronous seminars instead of lectures in physical class and succeeds in engaging students in very active and committed learning.

The university's on-line seminars with the assistance of advanced technologies, demonstrate unparalleled advantage in promoting active learning against physical classrooms. For instance, we can see only a few of participants sitting around a table simultaneously whereas we can see all faces on the computer screen, which gives each participant a sense of equal access and full participation. Moreover, computer-based virtual seminars can be supported by various technologies such as voice/facial expression sensing/analysis and engagement prompts which are not available in off-line class.²¹

We also need to examine the possibility of using the fifth generation cellular mobile communications technology (5G), which is expected to transform the entire communications industry. We need to find out how 5G can transform on-line education.

I am also planning to conduct an experiment on how new technology like Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality/Mixed Reality could expand the possibilities of on-line education. I have submitted the proposal for workshop at the Converge 2019, the global conference of International Coach Federation (ICF), a world association of professional coaches for sharing my findings.

Finally, we must delve into and revive our indigenous resources which have been marginalized in the modernization process. For instance, mindfulness meditation and whole system approach such as "World Café" are said to have originated in Japan, but became theorized/structured in the West and were recently re-introduced to Japan.

As Charles Taylor emphasized, the more we understand our own path to modernity, the better equipped we could understand and accept the difference with other cultures.²²

Endnotes

1 Charles Taylor contrasts interculturalism in Quebec with multiculturalism in English Canada as follows:

The 'multi' story decentres the traditional ethno-historical identity and refuses to put any other in its place. All such identities coexist in the society, but none is officialized. The 'inter' story starts from the reigning historical identity but sees it evolving in a process in which all citizens, of whatever identity, have a voice, and no-one's input has a privileged status.

Charles Taylor, Interculturalism or multiculturalism, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 38, No. 4-5, May/June, 2012, page 418.

2 Richard Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," in Stephen Shute and Susan Hurley editors, *On Human Rights – The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993*, BasicBooks, 1993.

3 It is our common understanding that we are now entering the information age as coined by Alvin Toffler, a prominent futurist. At the information age, knowledge-production and information-processing is taking over standardized mass-manufacturing and consequentially transforming a mind-set and industrial structure. Steve Case, a founder of American Online, inspired by Toffler's works, published *The Third Wave* in 2016 and presented his own interpretation of three stages of the information age focusing on Internet. In his account, there are three waves:

The First Wave of the Internet was building the infrastructure and foundation for an on-line world;

The Second Wave was development of on-line services such as Google and SNS which make it easier to utilize digital information already available on the web;

The third Wave, coined as InterNet of Everything, is transformation of major, real-world avenues such as health and education sectors by well-established and ever-expanding ubiquitous connectivity on the web.

Cathy N. Davidson, a leading scholar of higher education reform at the cyber age, emphasizes that one-size-fits-all model and standardization cannot fit in a world of social networking, crowdsourcing, customizing and user-generated content. Case says that 2016 is the starting year of the Third Wave.

See Steve Case, *The Third Wave – An Entrepreneur's Vision of the Future*, Simon & Schuster, 2016, pages 1-7 and Cathy N. Davidson, *Now You Can See It*, Penguin Books, 2011.

4 Robert Gibson, an intercultural consultant based in Munich, Germany, said that the English language is changing quite radically and the trend is not to have one or two clear standard Englishes like American English and British English, but to have a lot of different types of English. Lennox Morrison, "You need to go back to school to relearn English," in BBC Capital, 16 December 2016. Accessed on 10 June 2017.

5 Gérard Bouchard presented the five major paradigms for ethnocultural diversity; (1) diversity (English Canada, the United States, Sweden, Australia, India), (2) homogeneity (France, Japan, Russia), (3) bi-or multi polarity (Malaysia, Bolivia, Switzerland, Northern Ireland), (4) duality (Quebec), (5) mixité (Brazil, Mexico). Gérard Bouchard, *What is interculturalism?*, *McGill Law Journal* 56:2(2011), pages 441-444.

6 Lam Peng-Er, "At the Margin of a Liberal-Democratic State: Ethnic Minorities in Japan," in Will Kymlicka and Baogang He, editors, *Multiculturalism in Asia*, Oxford University Press, 2005, pages 224, 243.

7 Lam Peng-Er, *ibid.*, pages 224-225, 232.

8 U.S.-based Think Tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs, established in 1921, www.cfr.org, confirmed on 13 November 2018.

9 Model Diplomacy from the Council on Foreign Relations, <https://modeldiplomacy.cfr.org/#/>, confirmed on 27 November 2018.

10 “Quick Start Guide,” Model Diplomacy, <https://files-md.cfr.org/Model%20Diplomacy%20Quick%20Start%20Handout%2009282017.pdf>.

11 “Quick Start Guide,” *ibid.*

12 See LEX Institute – Hippo Family Club website (Japanese language), <https://www.lexhippo.gr.jp>, confirmed on 3 December 2018.

13 Yo Sakakibara, *Language is Our Music-The Natural Way to Multilingualism*, Language Research Foundation, 2013, pages 42-43.

14 ZOOM is on-line conference system with content-sharing function, cloud-recording capacity and breakout session which makes possible simultaneous hybrid interactive class, <https://zoom.us/feature>, confirmed on 10 June 2017.

15 Deviation score is calculated by standard deviation formula and a group of deviation score below 30 briefly means the lowest 16 percent of the total examinees.

16 Identity has individual and collective dimensions and is developed through social interaction in community. Akihiko Morita, “Collective Human Right to Collective Identity,” in Paul Tiedemann, editor, *Right to Identity* (ARSP-Beihefte, volume 147), Franz Steiner Verlag, January 2016, pages 167-177.

17 Watch <https://youtu.be/HgPxdbGAiao>, confirmed on November 30 2018.

18 Coaching is “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential”. See www.coachfederation.org/index.cfm, confirmed on 3 December 2018.

19 The mental training program is widely practiced in global corporations such as Google, see www.mindful.org/.

20 The details about the experimental class were presented at the International Conference on Innovation in Arts, Social Science and Education which was held on 21 - 23 December 2015 in New York, <<https://goo.gl/Hwgd6k>> confirmed on June 10, 2017.

21 Stephen M. Kosslyn and Ben Nelson editors, *Building the Intentional University*, MIT Press, 2018.

22 Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004, page xi.