

Group 1

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Whole Teaching-Learning
~Contemplating the Future~
教えと学びの全体像
~未来を見据えて~

The speakers at the UNU Global Seminar Fourth Shimane-Yamaguchi Session under the theme of “Towards a New Paradigm for Education” highlighted the problems that plague the current educational system and that require urgent attention. We must contemplate the socio-economic and cultural factors for these surrounding issues. In some areas of the world, where there are co-existing cultures, one may, and in some cases does, dominate the other to the point that the student’s native language is not even spoken in the classroom. There is also a persistent problem with arbitrary ranking of types of post-secondary education (vocational and academic) in the minds of many people. Seeing as teachers are the ones who can get rid of the preconceptions and cultural biases, and to do this they need to be capable and well trained. The problem with the system as it is today is that there is a lack of Whole Teaching and Whole Learning, and this problem needs to be rectified before we as a global community can consider our society truly democratic.

Almost two decades ago, 150 countries and 155 government organizations met in Jomtein, Thailand to discuss issues affecting the global state of education and its impact on sustainable development and poverty reduction. The theme of Education For All (EFA) was chosen as the highlight of the discussions. With the onslaught of globalization, the objectives of EFA, while relevant, require practical and ‘inclusive’ solutions that respect the core of society. This core is culture. Professor Konai Thaman of the University of the South Pacific, emphasizes that “education is inevitably about culture because it is the values of a culture that must underpin its education system” (Thaman, 2008). For example, although English is recognized as an important language to learn, in some cases such as Jamaica and Tonga, the local language is not taught at all in the classroom. Professor Thaman points out that it is a people’s culture, particularly their values, provides the framework and the lens through which they see

themselves and their world. Unfortunately this is not an ideal that is respected in many societies which continue to grapple with outside cultures being a dominant force in society, and particularly in education.

According to Skills Development Specialist Ann Richmond, in an effort to ensure that our young graduates in developed nations do not become a part of the alarming statistics which shows that those seeking to actively participate in the work force are two to three times more likely than older generations to find themselves unemployed. It is essential that the educational systems can accommodate this transition. She argues that there is an urgent need to move away from “outdated stereotypes” that suggests that vocational and technical education and training is second class, for people who are not intelligent, and not worth investing in. In fact, these students enter the work force earlier and can end up making more than those who defer earning for longer. She posits that there must be a new paradigm for education centered around a re-assessment of how society and the educational system itself treats vocational and technical training. Professor Yuki Honda, provides an engaging account of some of the problems now facing the young Japanese in the work world, such as the *Hikikomori* phenomenon, and intensifying public pressure to be successful. She cites several recommendations to overcome the challenges including an increase in the opportunities for vocational training in Japan.

The role of the teachers themselves should be re-assessed within the view these issues as well. To do this, teacher’s training must be extended to enhance the teaching-learning process, and to synergize General Education and Vocational and Technical Training. Even if a perfect educational system was established, without qualified teachers to carry it out, it will be useless. Today’s educational challenges need to be met with new strategies. These strategies include treating students as individuals who may or may not belong to the same culture as oneself, and promoting their interests by encouraging them to ask creative and critical questions. This may seem like a basic aspect of teaching, but in the case where young students ask particularly difficult or acute questions, they may be easily disregarded.

The title of this article is Whole Teaching-Learning. One cannot, and must not disregard any aspect of teaching and/or learning. Culture, which is a fundamental aspect of society, must not be ignored as is to often the case in developing countries. Education in all societies – developed and developing – should be expected to regard and take into account the culture and backgrounds of the students. In developed countries there is an

inequality in how students in vocational education are viewed. Education should effectively balance formal education and vocational and technical training. The key facilitators in all education are of course, educators, and these people need to be trained to impart their knowledge effectively and fairly. These people should act as catalysts for this New Educational Paradigm with these issues, among others, in mind.