

■ Project Review ■

**A Review of the “See the Future of Multicultural Society
with the Next Migrant Generation” Project:
Reflections on the Multicultural Programs in Nagoya and
Hamamatsu, Japan***

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Introduction

It was a cold spring day in Nagoya on February 17th, 2016. People who had prepared themselves for the harsh weather with heavy clothes smiled at their own wisdom, while others stood there, dreading the long day ahead. However, if I look back on the tightly packed schedule of the whole program, the bad weather of the first day was not that big of a deal. The program was exhaustive, but at the same time it provided an opportunity to share experiences from both Korea and Japan. It is regrettable that we had not done more research before our first visit. Nonetheless, the exchange through Toyota Foundation served as a stepping stone to building international networks among related associations. This essay will organize our journey in Nagoya and Hamamatsu and suggest some policy guidelines for South Korea.

* This essay written by the author is a review of the Sookmyung Institute for Multicultural Studies' exchange project, entitled “See the Future of Multicultural Society with the Next Migrant Generation.” Kang has participated in the exchange project and composed the essay based on her visit to Nagoya and Hamamatsu, Japan in February 2016. The exchange project was funded by the Toyota Foundation's International Grant Program.

International Exchange at Nagoya and Interview with Nagoya City Board of Education

The Nagoya City Board of Education is a highly important actor in providing language and public education for foreign children in the city. The Board is a public organization focused on elementary and junior high schools. It carries many responsibilities such as providing information and service for Japanese schools and language education and coordinating other available translation and interpretation services.

In Korea, the government designates schools with many foreign students as “preparatory schools” and delivers funds for in-school language education. However, the City of Nagoya runs rudimentary Japanese classes in two schools in the district. Children attending nearby elementary schools come in the morning to learn Japanese and go back to their own schools to study in the afternoon. Each system has its advantages. The preparatory school system of Korea works best in elementary school level due to the fact that younger students may face some transportation difficulties. However, it is harder for foreign students in other schools to learn Korean intensively in the beginning of their education. Therefore, the Korean preparatory school system is more exclusive compared to its Japanese counterpart. I believe it would be the best to combine both systems. There should be a two-track support system that designates either certain schools, if there is a concentrated foreign student population in an area, or multiple facilities with open classes, if the student population is more scattered. The City of Nagoya also has a separate program for educational language, which immigrated children desperately need in middle school level in Korea.

Orientation at the Resource Center for Multicultural Community Tokai

We finished our first schedule at the Board of Education and regathered at the YMCA building for more detailed orientation. We got to

listen to the overall plan, process, and some historical background of the multicultural program in Japan. It was very helpful in setting the tone for the whole program. Through the orientation, I have observed three key differences between multicultural programs in Japan and Korea. First, multicultural programs in Japan usually operate in local and municipal levels with a more specified plan for each district. Second, Japan does not use different terms for multicultural families, multicultural children, and immigrated children and simply categories them as “foreign.” Lastly, infrastructure for long-term residency is relatively well put together, once someone has finished the meticulous immigration process. It is a fundamentally different approach from Korea, where accompanying or invited children should leave the country in one or two year terms even if they are children of a Korean spouse. But at the same time, the objective of the multicultural program in Nagoya – “bond in language, bond in living, bond in region” – was not too different from the objective of our center.

In addition, Japan and Korea share similar concerns:

- nearly 70 percent of citizens do not know of multicultural policies,
- increased importance of multicultural coexistence due to low average birth rate of 1.35 and rising population above 60, and
- problems that may occur in the future due to the increased registration for permanent residency and growth in workforce by immigrated children.

Especially as a person who works with immigrated children and youth, I found useful the principles on delivering information in multiple languages. Those principles are 1) using grade two or three level language, 2) avoiding Kanji, 3) avoiding loanwords, and 4) avoiding subtle and vague expressions. I could feel the hard work and consideration behind such principles. It was also refreshing to look back on how many vague and complicated expressions our pamphlets contain.

There were photos of presentations that invited guardians and parents. Papers with symbols indicating different countries and languages

were attached to chairs to help parents find appropriate interpretation in their own languages. We also hold a lot of presentations for parents, but our service only extends as far as providing translated survey paper. Multi-language support in Japan was very much grounded in their principle of “multicultural coexistence.”

Our schedule for the first day was exhaustive, but we went to bed with hope. We obviously did not realize how hard the second day would be.

On the second day, we arrived in time at the station, got on the train, and headed for Hamamatsu. After we got off the train, we took a bus and went to the city hall. Hamamatsu is twinned with Ansan city in Korea, and some of the city officials had paid a visit to Ansan before, so I felt very excited.

International Affairs District and Board of Education in Hamamatsu

Brazilians represent 2.6 percent of the foreign population in Hamamatsu, and more than 80 percent of them are permanent residents. (The city has the largest Brazilian population in Japan, and I thought it was very similar to Guro-gu in Seoul or Ansan-si that has a large Chinese population.) The Brazilian diaspora are much more interested in educating their children in Japanese because, even though they are foreigners, they will continue to live in Japan. Their concerns of communication, social security, employment, housing, and education are very similar to our concerns in Ansan. What the official from the Board of Education said in his presentation displayed the angle in which the city chose to view such problems. He pointed out that the nation may prevent immigrants from entering the country, and businesses may fire foreigners; however, local districts have no power to prevent foreigners from settling down in their district. Therefore, we must find a way to live together.

The main education issues for Hamamatsu were 1) children who

have difficulties with both Japanese and their mother-tongue, 2) children who can speak but cannot write or read well, 3) children who have difficulties in entering higher education due to their lack of educational Japanese, and 4) children who do not attend school. I could sympathize with all of their concerns. Many immigrated children in Korea face the same challenges. What stood out to me the most was the program for children who do not attend school. The name, “Zero Foreign Children out of School Operation,” was very straightforward, which gave the impression of adamant determination. The city of Hamamatsu had no obligation to put every foreign children in school. Nonetheless, they persuaded children to go to school and helped adaptation by teaching Japanese in advance. The operation was successful, and now most of foreign children attend elementary and junior high schools. Another program on employment support for teenagers was quite impressive, regarding the fact that Japan lacks a youth population.

Personally, I felt closer to Hamamatsu than Nagoya. The programs focusing on its foreign children and youth demographic seemed very similar to those of Ansan-si and Ansan Global Youth Center. Like Hamamatsu, which became multinational with a strong Brazilian population, the city of Ansan is becoming multinational with a large Chinese population. The education counseling center in Hamamatsu is also very similar to our education counseling system (i.e., Ggumdari Sangdamsil). Adaptation support programs for students who do not speak the language of the hosting country (e.g., Japanese or Korean), pre-school education programs, parental education programs, after-school programs, and high school fairs are all very similar. This means that migrated children share the same desires and difficulties. Our next destination, HICE, also displayed such similarities.

Hamamatsu International Communication and Exchange (HICE)

HICE is a semi-public organization that is run by a corporate body under contract with Hamamatsu City. Its organizational structure is very similar to that of our center. Not only that, it was interesting to find out that HICE share similar direction, goal, work ethics, and strategies with us. Their large amount of available funding was admirable. What was especially intriguing was the resemblance of a youth program that trains migrant children as experts who actively participate at local level. Had there been more time and less language barrier, we could have exchanged so many more ideas. Migrants themselves have become working staff whose ideas train youth leaders as social workers. This process strengthens and intensifies the capabilities and potential of youth population.

HICE was also participating in the Zero Foreign Children out of School Operation, with more focus on youth. In 2011, there were eleven teenagers who did not attend school. Three years later, the number dropped to zero, and the operation was closed. During this process, HICE received the list of migrant children from the Board of Education, updated their immigration record six times per year, and even visited the children in person. However, in Korea the Ministry of Justice does not offer such lists due to the privacy protection law. Therefore, it is much harder to keep track of migrant youths that are in need of educational support. Even though Japan has a privacy protection law, the Hamamatsu City Board of Education, in working with semi-public organizations, provide them with updated information every two months. HICE, in turn, shares its report on youth that stay out of school with the Board of Education. Korea should consider implementing similar measures.

Many of the migrant youth in the region are mostly NEETs (“Not in Education, Employment, or Training”) who do not study nor work. Most of them do not have a sense of belonging to family and society. Korea also faces such situations. The first thing HICE did was to provide a safe space for adolescents to meet each other and hang out. With a

space of their own, the teens naturally formed a community gathering once a month, held employment support seminars, and ended up hosting job fairs. Listening to stories about how migrant teens in high school pass on messages and advice for younger generation, I keenly felt the importance of having “a place to gather.” It was thrilling to see how my dreams are actualizing in Japan. Once again, I came to the realization that a space that embraces the scattered youth, that they can trust and feel comfortable, could be the most important thing to youth.

HICE workers also emphasized that supporting kids outside of school, having youths themselves as participants and coordinators, and empowering them through the process are where HICE shines the most. It made me think about what the Ansan Global Youth Center can do, and whether we are discovering where our strength lies.

Hamamatsu Global Human Resource Support

Let me complain a little bit at this point. It was only our second day, yet we moved nonstop. We walked and walked; sometimes, we even had to run a bit. We met Hori-san when fatigue was catching up with us. Fortunately, we gained a lot of energy from Hori-san. First, it was the first time we were offered real treats – not just tea or water, but tangerines! I can still remember their sweet taste. But more importantly, Hisano Hori was an archetype of a pioneer, passionate, enthusiastic, and genuine. Hori-san gave us new insight through her bright energy and passion. It was impressive to see college volunteers actively participate in the program. Seeing migrant youth actively engage in the program and volunteer after they experience it was an important lesson to us.

Their main project, the “piyo-piyo” program, was very simple yet efficient. It is a program where college students help young migrant and foreign children before they enter public education. College students help kids experience an elementary school environment and education material five days before the school starts. After, they help kids who have trouble

adjusting to school through mentoring. Hidden in this simple program is immeasurable strength. College students raise their own funds by visiting local businesses and giving presentations, rent their own bus, recruit other volunteers, and spend one year in preparation and aftercare.

It was hard to believe that a whole year goes into preparing for only five days, yet that was what was happening. The program gave students such agency; they raise their own funds, pay their own money to receive international training, and sometimes become actual teachers. Some kids who received help from the program later return as volunteers. It was amazing how much effort and time Hori-san and students put into actualizing what only seemed ideal.

Our center also has a pre-school program. Piyo-piyo is only a five-day program, but in our center, we spend three whole months to meet kids and prepare them for elementary school. On surface, it seems that our program has much more content, but in fact, we lack the most important thing – history, pride, and agency of actual participants. In the end, the quality of a program lies not in the duration but in the sense of ownership of participants. I applaud them for setting a clear goal and accomplishing it with such passion. The liberty and challenge Hori-san enjoyed in a completely private non-profit organization seemed very desirable.

We met Hori-san again in June when the Japanese team visited Korea. We had such a great time together; it was as if we had known each other for ten years. In the end, what mattered is not the time but our mind and passion.

Nagoya International Center (NIC)

It was our third day of visit, and we started to walk around Nagoya in the morning. Our feet were blistered. We were so fatigued, yet there was no time to stop to grab coffee. Luckily, we were able to get some coffee when we visited NIC. Like HICE, it operates as a semi-public

organization, and many of the staff have been working there for quite some time. They have books in different languages so parents can read to their children in their mother-tongue language. That resembled “MODU,” the multicultural children’s library that our center had previously. NIC focuses on providing more opportunities to participate by offering regular events for foreign children.

NIC also publishes monthly pamphlets and multilingual pamphlets that always contain disaster prevention information. Such information is not only emphasized in NIC, but in every multi-culture center in Japan. After multiple incidents where foreigners suffered more damage during an earthquake due to the language barrier, the safety information is always translated and interpreted in multiple languages. At that time, I thought that such measures were characteristic of Japan where earthquakes often occur. But, seeing how Korea has also suffered from multiple cases of earthquake recently, I now feel the necessity of providing information, not only on earthquakes, but on safety in general, in multiple languages.

In addition, NIC offers counseling on domestic violence, divorce, child psychology, counseling with lawyers, and even visiting counseling to help adaptation process. This is similar to what most of the multicultural and migration organizations offer in Korea.

Korean Net Aichi

We went to meet members of the Korean diaspora in Japan. The Korean Net Aichi was a nursing home for first generation Korean diaspora. The executive secretary of the organization, Sunae Kim, told us her story of how she was a Korean in Japan but a Japanese in Korea. Her story helped us understand better how foreigners in Korea would feel. She showed us a paper *Hanbok* she made with diaspora children and elaborated its meaning as follows. Hanbok is a traditional attire of Korea, but the paper that is used to make this Hanbok is Japanese paper. The message was clear, and I felt as though I sensed the chaos and

difficulties they experience. Kids in the third and fourth generations of Korean diaspora, who attend Korean schools in Japan, still face many discriminations. Creating a harmony among people with different culture, nationalities, and languages cannot be accomplished with only government policies and association activities. The ideal multicultural society can only be reached through participation of ordinary citizens.

We spent our last day afternoon in a workshop with people we met through the exchange program. There were some complaints about how exhaustive the program was, but looking back, I have received a lot of lessons and challenges, some of which I have been able to apply in my life, others I have yet to prepare. I would like to finish this essay in gratitude of two people who have worked so hard to make the program work. I would like to thank Yoshihiko Doi, a coordinator from Japan, who has surprised us all with his vast knowledge and networks. I would also like to thank our interpreter, Ms. Yang, who, with much care and interest, helped us immensely with understanding each organization.

The exchange program of Toyota Foundation stands out from other exchange programs because you not only get to learn, but feel and experience at the same time. It gives field experts desire to learn more and think harder. The centralized multicultural policy system of Korea may have some advantages compared to its Japanese counterparts. However, Japan's localized program that aims to boost active participation at local and municipal level is something we can learn from. I hope to continue our communication with organizations I have met through this visit. Together, with a deep sense of understanding, I believe we can construct a right path towards progress.

Biographical Note

Eun-yeo Kang is the director of the Ansan Global Youth Center, established in 2009. The Ansan Global Youth Center (previously known as Ansan Migrant Children & Youth Center) is dedicated to serving the multicultural community and its members mainly residing in the city of Ansan under its mission, "Different but Equal." The center is also operating its programs and services partnering with the city government of Ansan and the Bokumjari Social Welfare Corporation.
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