

Linking Global Research to Local Practice: Building channels and meeting the challenges in Japan

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要旨

いつの時代も社会の持続性と進歩は、人々が次世代を教え、単に過去をまねるのではなく、未来が突きつける課題によりよく対応できるように導く能力に依存してきた。そのために、文部科学省は、あらゆるレベルの教育と研究の現場で教室や研究室に閉じこもらずに、地域社会とかかわりをもつという、手本となるような良い取り組み(GP)を推進してきた。また、現職教員と退職教員、役人と大学の研究者などが自発的につどって結成した「山口家庭教育学会」では、子育て・幼児教育に関する調査研究を、地域レベルからグローバルレベルにいたるまでさまざまな分野で進めている。

例えば、山口県・中国山東省・韓国慶州南道で実施した子育てをめぐる大規模なアンケート調査の結果、山東省の親の8割までが子どもを海外の大学で学ばせたいと願い、慶州南道の子供達はおどろくほど短い睡眠時間で受験勉強し、山口では放課後の勉強時間が圧倒的に少ないことなどが明らかになったのだった。この論文では、大学に籍を置く研究者たちが地域の協力者の方々とともに、国内外を問わないつながりを作り上げながら、急速なグローバル化の中での子育ての実態と政策の現状と課題に答えることができるリソースセンターを作り上げようとしている挑戦について述べる。その内容は、1)異なる文化・異なる言語の橋渡し、2)取り組み意欲の減退と古い因習の克服、3)仲間のもの見方を明快にし、共有すること、4)お金・時間・人の限界をきたさない範囲で、現在進行中の望ましい動きを見つけ出し分かち合うこと、となるであろう。

Abstract

Social sustainability and advancement throughout the ages has depended on the ability of a population to educate the next generations to better meet the challenges of the future, rather than simply to mimic the traditions of the past. Japan's Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Technology (MEXT) has been urging educators and researchers at all levels in Japan to become more relevant by going beyond the isolated realm of the classroom or laboratory to engage with local communities in order to advocate and implement "good practices." The Yamaguchi Family Education Association (Katei Kyouiku Gakkai) has been organized by a volunteer group of active and retired educators, government workers and university researchers interested in bringing both local and global research to bear on childrearing practices for families and professionals involved children's education.

This article will describe the activities and challenges of a handful of university researchers and their local collaborators who are forging links both internationally and domestically in an attempt to make available a reservoir of resources aimed at improving the social vision as well as current childrearing policies and practices in this era of rapid globalization. The challenges being faced include 1) bridging gaps of cultural understanding and language, 2) overcoming natural entropy and entrenchment of local perceptions and traditional practices, 3) clarifying and unifying the of vision of collaborators, and 4) working within the constraints of funding, time and human resources to identify, share and implement desired changes in practice.

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Introduction

With an ocean of pedagogical knowledge fed by streams of global educational practice and social science research over many decades, why is it that so many children experience their school lives and education in general as dry and desert-like? What can be done to see that “good” and “best practices” in children's education become applied more broadly in Japan? This paper explores the experience of a small team of researchers at Yamaguchi Prefectural University, Japan, along with local collaborators in the Yamaguchi Family Education Association (*Kattei Kyouiku Gakkai*), who are endeavoring to convey and encourage excellent approaches gleaned from local, national and international research and experience in order to enrich and enhance the skills and practices of parents, educators and policy makers in our semi-rural area of Japan.

The evolution of universities in Japan:

The role of research in the social sciences in Japanese universities has recently begun to take on a sharper focus. As in many modern cultures, hard sciences with concrete results have often been favored. But with social sciences, it seems careers were built on finding esoteric niches where a researcher could publish and be “recognized” by like-minded colleagues here and there, but left to his or her own particular ivory tower without making much effort in the area of application.

The modern education system began with in the Meiji Era (1868) as Japan was emerging from its feudal past. It has had as a central aim that Japan should be a full participant among the strong nations of the world. The university system, developed in the 1870s, began with a focus on modern sciences as taught in the West in order to develop a stronger technological base for the population. The bulk of the resources went to the more prestigious universities in urban areas. Gradually local and rural colleges and universities, more in the nature of vocational schools, were supported to a level considered proportionate to the needs of their local populations to contribute to a national agenda. “The successful mobilization of the whole nation was completed by the early 1930s,” according to Yamamura, “together with permeation into the masses of a mind-set based on modern Western science that was carried by enlightened bureaucrats and urban intellectuals.” (Yamamura, 2002, p. 5) Although centralization of the education processes has had its merits in developing an educated and able population, the downside has been that diversity and depth has suffered in the path of uniformity (Tsunoi, 2007). Up until the end of World War II, social education and moral education were tradition-based. Families and communities honored the imperial authority conferred on the schools. After the war, the Ministry of Education continued a centralized role directing education through a series of updates of nationally uniform policies (Onishi, 1995). However, in many localities both rural and urban, wartime militarism and post-war mechanization played an inadvertent role over time in eroding and hollowing out the vitality of the social fabric that had nourished a strong community-based citizenry over centuries.

Heading into the 21st century and facing the reality of an overly-urbanized and shrinking population, and still desiring to educate its population to be able to contribute to global development, internationalization and world peace, Japan's Ministry of Education revised its Fundamental Law of Education (FLE) once again in 2006. Among its current goals is to develop a university system that can compete internationally in terms of quality of educational standards, research input and output, and while doing this, to put a new focus on the revitalization of localities throughout Japan.

In December, 2006, the Ministry of Science, Education, Culture, Sports and Technology (MEXT) declared, “universities shall contribute to social development through the...creation of new knowledge to be made available to the society at large.” (Van Drom, 2008, p. 1) The encouragement of universities to experiment at the local level and to become more involved in sharing and applying relevant knowledge to the local populations, however, began for nearly a decade before announcing this official change. In a 2003 White Paper MEXT stated, “In recent years various efforts actively utilizing local universities as the triggers for regional revitalization and centers of regional development have been attracting attention. For local governments, this has the advantage

not only of promoting regional industry, but also of utilizing as much as possible the human and physical resources and overall strength accumulated by universities over many years in many areas of society such as medical care; welfare, training of human resources, and culture.” (MEXT, 2003, p. 1) “In addition to the role of universities in education and research, their contribution to the regions is very important and it is necessary for all universities...to proceed actively with regional contribution in future.” (ibid, p. 2)

Global Research efforts at Yamaguchi Prefectural University

Yamaguchi Prefectural University (YPU) is a small institution in the western-most prefecture (province) of Japan's main island of Honshu. In 2011 YPU celebrated its 70th anniversary. It began as a women's vocational school during the Second World War. The educational offerings at the time were literature and home economics. Gradually it has evolved into a full four-year co-educational institution offering courses in three faculties: International Studies, Social Welfare, Nursing and Nutrition. It has a graduate school offering advanced degrees to the doctoral level in International Studies and Health Sciences. The student body of about 1,000 students is drawn from prefectures throughout Japan as well as international exchange students from Korea, China, Spain, Canada and the United States. As Yamaguchi Prefecture has its own proud heritage of often being on the cutting edge of national and international developments throughout Japan's history, YPU is positively engaged in the social changes of the 21st century and welcomes the international as well as the local goals expressed by the Ministry of Education.

The authors are two of the seven full-time foreign faculty members hired by the university (all currently focused on language teaching). Although our teaching duties focus on English language education, Professors Higgins and Wilson (both American by birth, but permanent residents of Japan) have chosen to dedicate much of our research time to the effort to draw on and exchange information and cross-cultural perspectives in children's education and moral development to the educators, parents and policy makers of Japan. We scan the globe for excellent educational practices to introduce and share positive approaches from Japan to educators around the world. In collaboration with two Japanese colleagues, Professors Tsugio Aihara and Masako Iwano, research grants have been obtained from MEXT that have enabled us to cast a wide net in searching globally for worthy approaches that might be integrated into the currently malleable educational reforms of Japan.

In the early stages of the successive and overlapping projects, Professor Aihara linked with researchers at YPU's sister universities in Qufu, Shandong Province, China and Kyongnam, South Korea to make a comparative survey of about 2000 parents of upper-elementary and middle school students and their children about child-rearing practices. Baseline data were collected on a wide range of life-style details (bed-times, time spent in various activities, time spent with parents, and so on), as well as attitudes, hopes and fears of parents and children for the future of their children (Aihara, 2005). The survey was called *An International Comparison of the Socialization of Children in Today's Rapidly Changing Society: with a focus on surveys conducted on parents and children in Japan, China and Korea*.

Comments and conclusions from the researchers in each of the countries indicates that the data held a great many surprises for them about how far families in each country had strayed from the “traditional norms” that were considered ideal or healthy in raising and educating children. For example, the Chinese researcher, Zhang Liangcai, reported that he was shocked to find that over 80% of parents in his area of China reported that they hoped their children would go to foreign universities in the future (with 34 % specifically stating hopes that their children will attend prestigious or famous universities). He lamented that at the time less than 50 % of Chinese graduated from high school, only 1% of Chinese were able to go abroad to study and there was room in Chinese universities for only about 10% of the population. This would mean that over 70% at least of the families surveyed would likely end up feeling that their children's lives were “failures” even before they began their working life. He vowed to work on bringing a more realistic perspective to the definition of successful education to his population.

The Koreans were surprised to find how sleep-deprived their study-focused children were (as reported by both the parents and the children). At the same time, the Japanese researcher was surprised to find that a high percentage (57%) of the middle school students in Yamaguchi were reportedly doing less than an hour per day of homework and far fewer attended after-school tutoring than was thought (1.4% compared to 36% of Koreans). Their learning motivation was far lower than had been expected (with nearly 50% reporting that the sometimes or often do not feel like going to school), their communication time with parents was quite low, while television-viewing time was unexpectedly high. In a similar, but smaller study, Higgins (2000) recognized that students at the middle school level in Japan were reporting alarming deficits in social interaction both within their families and in many cases with friends.

The overall conclusion of the studies indicated a need for better balance in what Zhang Liangcai referred to as “the triple-axis of school education, social education and child rearing.” (Aihara, 2005, p. 154) In other words, it was recognized that attention needed to focus on the balance and interactions between the home, school and the community. The Aihara survey reported that between 65% and 95% of parents in all three societies expressed a desire for more opportunities for children to be involved in community through volunteer activities, neighborhood-based guidance activities and to have more common awareness and approaches to discipline by people in their neighborhoods.

While this survey work was in process, Professor Higgins was reviewing literature in moral and social education from the US and other countries. Outstanding work of the Search Institute, which had synthesized the results of 1200 social science research reports to create a framework of Developmental Assets (20 external and 20 internal “assets” that contribute to a child's positive growth and educational development) (Scales, et al, 2004, Search Institute, 2011), along with a multi-disciplinary ground-breaking report called “Hard-wired to Connect” (YMCA of the USA, Dartmouth Medical School, Institute for American Values, 2003) were two approaches that resonated with the conclusions that the Asian researchers were drawing about the need to identify more clearly the positive and negative aspects of our current education systems.

If the social systems were changing faster than researchers could keep up with them, how could we help parents, teachers, educators in general to become aware of what needs to be done to keep the rapidly-changing educational environments in balance before a generation or two was “lost”?

Model programs such as The Virtues Project (based in Canada with outreach to over 80 countries) and Full-Circle Learning (based in the US with links to 12 countries) which were already in the process of making positive impact in bringing balance back to overly academic approaches to education were brought to the attention of the Japanese colleagues. As selected materials were translated, ad hoc workshops sharing the models and methods of The Virtues Project as well as the Full-Circle Learning program were carried out with interested local elementary school teachers from 2005 through 2009. A Full-Circle Learning link was established between the upper-grade level “International Club” at Miyano Elementary School, the “English club” at Miyano Junior High School (both near YPU), the English Speaking Society (ESS) at YPU and the “humanitarian” (5th grade) class at the Full-Circle Learning Academy in Los Angeles. Exchanges of information from students, pictures and projects are made about once a year, with the YPU ESS students acting as translators from English to Japanese and Japanese to English (Langness, 2011) .

In 2008, aided by MEXT research funds, the entire team -- Professors Aihara, Iwano, Wilson and Higgins -- were able to visit three key projects in the US: The Search Institute in Minnesota, The Virtues Project founders in Canada and The Full-Circle Learning Academy in Los Angeles, California. The visit in each place of just two or three days (10 days total) armed us with more information and ideas than could possibly be applied in our professional lives.

Our challenges included selecting the key approaches that we would be able to translate and put into formats that would be found useful to local parents and educators. We were challenged not only to make some of the practical approaches available immediately, but also to continue to enhance and harmonize our research

activities along the lines that we could see were yielding a rich and helpful harvest through these projects. We had to “translate” materials and programs in ways that would be “linkable” with Japanese culture and in keeping with the requirements of the grant funding available from the Ministry of Education or other outside agencies, while carrying on increasing teaching and administrative course loads at the university.

Over the next year, collaboration of Professor Amy Wilson and Professor Masako Iwano with one of the key researchers at Search Institute, Arturo Sesma, enabled complex information and research tools from the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) to be translated into Japanese. Professor Aihara drew on his wide network of educational administrators to enable a nation-wide research survey using the DAP and a survey of 14,000 students drawn from the entire nation of Japan was carried out (Wilson, 2009) .

At the same time, we recognized that enduring channels must be built to make the wealth of materials and information more widely available to those who were in the midst of the challenges of educating children. The team began to share the highlights and key points of what we were learning to local parents and educators through the Yamaguchi Family Education Association organized as a consortium of professionals and lay people concerned about education in the Yamaguchi area. Inspired by the community collaboration ignited in Minnesota by the Search Institute, we also translated the “40 Assets” summary into Japanese and produced an easily accessible website and colorful flyers to distribute to parents and school organizations in 2009.

The Yamaguchi Family Education Association

The Yamaguchi Family Education Association was established in February, 2003, and quickly grew to a membership of over 250 people, most of whom were not researchers but parents in the midst of raising their children, various schools' PTA members, members of various children's groups and child support NPOs and NGOs, teachers and administrators at local day care centers, nursery schools, elementary, junior and senior high schools, and government employees from various departments concerning children's education and welfare (Yamaguchi Family Education Association (ed.), 2005). From its start, the main goal has been “the creation of a culture of child-raising in the local community” (ibid), and it has worked over the years to maintain its goal by holding several annual seminars, workshops and research forums which present both academic research as well as reports from people from various fields working with children.

CHART 1.

List of Activities for Yamaguchi Family Education Association, 2006-2011

- 2006 **3th Annual YFEA Research Forum** (2/18/2006)
Discussion Group 1 - Creating a Richer Children's Culture
Discussion Group 2 - Building Support Networks
Discussion Group 3 - Children and the Environment
Keynote Speech Theme - 'What We Can Learn from Children's Picture Books'
Symposium on Building Trust and Security in Child-Rearing
2006 Annual Forum on Family Education (6/17/2006)
Theme - “On the Depths of Parent/Child Relations”
2006 Speaking from the Heart Meeting (9/2-3/2006)
Forum Theme - “How Should YFEA Work to Activate Community Activities in Local Areas”
Workshop - “Nagging and other Discipline Methods that Fail”
- 2007 **1st Community Forum in Hofu** (2/4/2007)
Symposium - 'Raising Children around the World - Korea, America, Russia, and Japan'
Group Discussion
4th Annual YFEA Research Forum (2/17/2007)
Discussion Group 1 - Dietary Education

- Discussion Group 2 - Bullying and Abuse
Discussion Group 3 - Family Support
Main Speech Theme - 'Considering the Relationship between Parents and Children'
Symposium on Parent/Child Relationships
2007 Annual Forum on Family Education (6/23/2007)
Theme - "On the Decline in Family Education"
Videos - "What Makes a Home?", "Making Rules with Kids"
Group Discussion
2nd Community Forum in Nagato (8/25/2007)
Theme - "Nagato - Let's Talk about Child-Raising"
Keynote Speech - Froebel & Pestarocci's Child-Rearing Principles
Workshops - Bamboo Block, Yarn Art, Discussion Workshops
- 2008 **5th Annual YFEA Research Forum (2/16/2008)**
Discussion Group 1 - Raising Each Child Individually
Discussion Group 2 - Having Fun in Child Raising
Discussion Group 3 - Child-Raising in the Local Community
Keynote Speech Theme - 'Factors which Effect Childrens' Healthy Development'
Slides & Talk - "Child-Raising in the United States - A Report on Various Childrens' Character Development Programs"
2008 Annual Forum on Family Education (6/21/2008)
Theme - "Our Relationship with the Media - How Families Should Cope"
3rd Community Forum in Iwakuni (8/23/2008)
Theme - "Iwakuni - Let's Talk about Child-Raising"
Keynote Speech - A New Theory for Having Fun Raising Children"
Workshop - Developmental Assets Workshop
- 2009 **6th Annual YFEA Research Forum (2/21/2009)**
Discussion Group 1 - Raising Kids to be Kids
Discussion Group 2 - Raising Kids as a Family
Discussion Group 3 - Raising Kids as a Community
Keynote Speech Theme - 'Health Through Daily Living - Raising Healthy Children in Healthy Families'
- 2009 Annual Forum on Family Education (6/20/2009)**
Theme - "Revisiting Yoshida Shouin's Thoughts on Education and Family Life"
- 2010 **7th Annual YFEA Research Forum (2/20/2010)**
Symposium "Building Connections of the Heart"
Keynote Speech - "From a 103-Year-Old - Hand-made Toys to Build Connections"
2010 Annual Forum on Family Education (6/19/2010)
Theme - "Reconsidering Family Education - A Review of the Yamaguchi Prefectural Education Leaflet 'Building Dreams Through Family Education'"
Group Discussion
Yamaguchi Prefectural Department for Children's Futures Sponsored Forum Series "Yamaguchi Child-Raising Support Network Seminar"
(10/2/2010 - 2/19/2011)
Four Community Seminars
Theme - "Characteristics and Challenges Seen from of the Development Assets Profile Data of Children in Japan and Yamaguchi - A Comparison Survey of Japanese and American Assets"
Group Workshops - "Developing Assets in Children in Yamaguchi Prefecture"

- 2011 8th Annual YFEA Research Forum (2/20/2011)
Symposium “Realizing Results for Yamaguchi-Style Child Raising Support Networks”
Keynote Speech - “The Activities of the ‘Reading Books, Sweet Dreams’ Project”
Special Performance “Nurturing Children's Hearts through Music - The Secrets of Folksongs”
2011 Annual Forum on Family Education (6/18/2011)
Theme - “Realizing Results for Yamaguchi-Style Child Raising Support Networks - What We've Learned from this Seminar Series”
Group Discussion

Throughout its various publications, the Yamaguchi Family Education Association (YFEA) stresses the importance of strengthening ties between the family, the local community, and schools in order to ensure the best environment for children to be raised with the skills necessary to help them develop into fully functioning adults.

In its fourth year, YFEA received a three-year grant from the prefectural government allowing it to begin a series of Community Forums in various localities around the prefecture, enabling it to reach out to more parents, educators, and local government officials in towns farther away from Yamaguchi. The forums were designed to attract local professionals as well as parents to both listen to speeches by experts in the field as well as participating in group discussions to facilitate communication between the two groups. For each forum, a different theme was used, and the group workshops were designed to discuss or experience the topic that had been presented by the keynote speaker.

Another workshop series was conducted in 2010, which focused on the Developmental Assets data from both Japan and the United States, and was designed to use a series of four workshops conducted throughout the prefecture to develop a “picture” of child-raising in Yamaguchi Prefecture by talking to professionals and parents in various small cities and towns in order to discover any characteristics unique to the local area and/or to Yamaguchi Prefecture. The cumulative results of these workshops, which involved approximately 150 participants, were presented at the 8th Annual YFEA Research Forum, and suggestions were made for improving family education and support in homes, local communities and schools.

While the main focus of YFEA has been on Workshops for Local Communities, Symposiums and Research Forums, and on producing publications which report on the findings at these gatherings to members and other interested parties, YFEA has also contributed to community efforts in family education by lending its expertise to other groups. In one example, it worked with the Yamaguchi PTA Joint Association to analyze and report on the results of a survey regarding family education and school life for parents of elementary and junior high school students (Yamaguchi PTA Joint Association, 2005) .

Challenges of adapting global research to local practice:

Through the efforts of YFEA, research on the Developmental Assets has been disseminated to a large number of people throughout the prefecture, and the feedback from YFEA members indicates that they are passing this useful information on to their professional colleagues. As researchers we are ready to continue on to the next step of research, which will be to translate and adapt a longer survey in order to be sure that the Developmental Assets are culturally relevant to Japan.

Cultural relevance is a problem that has haunted us as researchers throughout the project - first, due to translation and language differences. Idiomatic expressions such as “I stand up for what I believe,” may not really have a equivalent expression in Japanese. In a country noted for its lack of displays of affection, questions asking about love and support were difficult to convey. In a country noted for its lack of drug trafficking, a question regarding the use of illegal drugs had to be eliminated. Also, while most people in the United States have a relatively clear concept of their involvement in religion (or lack thereof), Japanese people tend to

mix and match traditions from Buddhism, Shinto, and even Christianity, and, while they might pray to their ancestors in the small shrine in their home every day and visit a Buddhist temple once or twice a year, most would find it hard to say that they are “participating in religious activities” one or more times a week (one of the items on the DAP survey). These were just a few of the examples in translation and cultural-relevance problems.

As we delve further into the Developmental Assets, and begin to try to link them to culturally significant “high-risk” and “positive” behaviors here in Japan, we are faced with the difficult decision of whether to adhere to the set of questions provided originally in the American study and risk having the Japanese data become irrelevant or even incorrect, or to change the question set in order to make it more culturally meaningful and risk being unable to compare data across countries.

As we have begun to work on this area of research, we have also begun a new Workshop Series in cooperation with YFEA, again funded by a generous grant from the local government. In this series, we are inviting parents, PTA members, educators and local professionals to listen to the opinions of the children they are working for every day, something which, although widely practiced in the U.S. by promoters of the Developmental Assets, is rarely done in Japan. By introducing these junior high school students to the Developmental Assets, having them discuss it amongst themselves, and later present their findings to these adults, we are hoping we will not only be able to impart new knowledge to the adults, but help them to realize that youngsters are a crucial part of the decision-making process. This is another cultural challenge that is proving to be very difficult to surmount in Japan where children have been socialized to avoid vocalizing their opinions. Still, we feel that the effort itself may provide seminal educational experience that can be considered yet another way to link global research to local practice regardless of immediate results.

Challenges of local disseminators - the case of YFEA

While YFEA has made a great contribution to building bridges between homes, communities, schools, and has brought significant research to educational and welfare professionals, it has recently begun to reach a turning point. The main reason for this could be its administrative structure, which has remained virtually constant for its eight-year existence. While the Board of Directors is made up of over 30 people and membership in the Board slowly changes, the active body of Directors which meets regularly to plan activities for the Association consists of only approximately ten people, most of whom have been active in the management since the beginning. Over half of these active Directors are past retirement age, and several are over the age of seventy. While their abilities at planning and their network of contacts they can draw upon when looking for speakers and planning various forums and workshops is extensive, they lack sufficient ties to the younger generation of parents and professionals to whom they are trying to reach out.

In addition, the association could benefit from administrative and management consulting services to revamp their activities and discover new areas in which they could contribute their expertise to the community. While their workshops, symposiums and forums are both interesting and informative, a different marketing strategy to draw in more parents with young children could help revitalize these activities, which in turn could provide feedback for further activities in the future. The wealth of knowledge and experience represented even by just the Board of Directors and the active managing body is not being utilized to its full extent, due to the fact that these experts are having to spend most of their time dealing with the day-to-day administrative duties of an organization of that size and the complexity of planning and executing its various activities. An influx of younger and less experienced members into the Board of Directors, and an increase in the number of active managers would free up the current administrators and officers to do what they do best - using their networks to provide the best services to members and the general public.

Yet another area that has not been fully exploited is the expertise YFEA could provide to other organizations, schools and communities. The activities in which the organization participates are solely planned and executed

by the organization, with occasional funding from other organizations and government bodies. Yet again, with proper marketing and an influx of active officers to assist with the administrative aspects, the organization could begin to offer its services to school PTAs, community groups and governmental departments, in the form of providing speakers, planning and operations for large gatherings regarding family education and children's welfare, and providing research and consulting services to various groups desiring to do surveys or other forms of research regarding children, parents, communities and schools.

With its original membership of over 250 dwindling down to less than 150 members, the increasing difficulty of finding outside funding in the continuing economic downturn in Japan, and the 'aging' of the active members who have spent so much time and energy over the past 8 years slowly leading to a "burn-out effect," YFEA has reached a turning point. It must decide whether to revamp its efforts to reach out and meet the continuously changing needs of the family, community and schools in today's Japan, or to slowly wind up its effort.

Conclusion

The experience of these researchers over the past dynamic decade has left us at once exhilarated by the progress that our efforts have made, and still daunted by the challenges that face us as we endeavor to keep up the momentum of this important work.

While we have received gratifying feedback from teachers, parents and administrators who have been grateful to find a viewpoint, a method, an approach that they find useful to enhancing and enriching their endeavors in education, we do not find enough "space" in the system to carry out large or extended projects that can more fully utilize the useful models that would, we are certain, make a positive impact and overcome some of the current "pain points" in the social and educational system.

One of the overall challenges is that social systems seem to be moving at a speed faster than applied research projects can keep up with. Even as routines of research and reporting are established, transitions within the organization occur over time, and there is continual need to reflect on progress made and to assess future opportunities, prospects and challenges.

Yet the sheer volume of research and available information makes the challenge of selecting "best" or most relevant practices an all the more daunting task. And if, as data miners, we happen to come upon "a vein of gold" of well-documented and well-synthesized research (as with the three excellent programs we identified), the challenge of translating, processing and setting that information into a form fitting the needs and logistical possibilities for change in our local areas becomes the next issue. As our experience with working with the Developmental Assets Profile has shown, for example, languages and cultural barriers are not easy to cross. Finding translators with both language skill and diligent attention to social nuances is rare and their time is worth far more than they are usually paid for.

Delivering relevant research in a usable form to those willing and able to try them also takes a degree of organization and a keen sense of timing and practical logistics. The experienced educators who formed the Yamaguchi Family Education Association, were able to set up routines that fit in well with the annual educational calendar cycle in the area. Even with minimal manpower they managed to organize informative and reasonably well-attended events each year. However, their efficiency is now showing a slightly debilitating side-effect in that the same people, carrying out the same routines, are gradually reaching a natural attrition due age or added responsibilities in other arenas. The manpower base needs expansion.

The organization, so well-begun, must find a way to grow, or face a natural extinction. However, the "burn-out" factor seems to be prevalent throughout the whole of society at this point. Many projects, research efforts, educational innovations, etc. that have been spurred by the energetic look ahead at the new century, seem to be in need of review for efficiency and effectiveness as we go into the second decade of the 21st century.

Still, if there is more worthwhile or more needed work, we have not found it. There is a sea of knowledge, and our challenge as university-level researchers is to endeavor to build with others in our localities the irrigation

channels so that as many children and the educators who serve them as possible can benefit from it.

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