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Keynote Address

**“Reflections on an International Education
Agenda for the 21st Century”**

**Gavan McCormack
Australian National University, Canberra
(gavan@coombs.anu.edu.au)**

Introduction

It is just over 45 years since a hot, steamy June day in 1962 when I first made landfall at Yokohama. My experience of international education began then. For almost five decades I have been visiting, studying, living in, working in and thinking about Japan, and about broader questions of life and meaning. Student then, I may be now a professor, but essentially I remain a student. I know very little, but at least I know better now how much I do not know.

Then, Japan was on the cusp of high growth transformation: expressways and Shinkansen, even the Tokyo Olympics, let alone cell-phones and walkman, were still in the future; a train journey to Kyoto took about 7 hours; Japanese people still needed permission to gain foreign currency, or a passport to travel, and the salary-man army was working a “five day week” – Monday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Friday. Then, there was no Temple University. There were few foreign students (although I lived for a time in a house full of them at Komaba), and nobody held conferences on International Education. How remote that age now seems.

Over the years since then, I have written a number of books about aspects of Japanese history, war and peace, identity, democracy, the constitution, nature, relations with Asia (especially China and Korea) and with the US and with Australia. I am coming now from a series of lecture-meetings and conferences in Britain, France, the US and Canada on problems of the Japanese state and its relations with US and with Asia, nuclear politics, and the North Korea question. The invitation to address this meeting today on International Education has proven singularly difficult, because it is so different from what I normally do, but what I will try to do, therefore, is distil some of the lessons I have learned in this four and a half decades in various sectors of the world of higher education in Australia, Japan, UK, US, and to a lesser extent in China and Korea.

I find I want to say several things, about the role of the university in general, the content of education and curricula appropriate to the contemporary world, how universities are addressing and should be addressing their mission, and then make some remarks on Japanese education in general, including the school sector..

The university may be defined as the human institution devoted to studying, preserving, passing on, and refining the collective wisdom and beauty of humanity, and reflecting on the challenges and dangers we face as a civilization – understanding the past and imagining the future. As for international education, is that not an oxymoron, for is not all knowledge rooted in universals rather than national cultures? And yet, when one thinks about it, globalization has indeed transformed the educational world as it has transformed industry, living patterns, culture. The few students from the industrial world that came to Japan to study in the early 1960s came to study Buddhism (as I originally did) or art, or philosophy; nobody came to study engineering or management or technology. Now international education has become a big global market, with universities contending fiercely for their share of it, Japan no less than other countries, but most would agree that Japan lags significantly behind. Why that might be, I will also make some suggestions.

International education is of course much more than the globalized flow of students. Education has two aspects – the imparting and gaining of useful skills and technologies, and the cultivation of critical and imaginative thinking. Both the physical and social sciences have a shared methodology, of systematic doubt, criticism, testing, the formulation and testing of hypotheses, consideration of alternatives. The health of democratic institutions depends in the last resort on the maintenance and health of such institutions and on their independence of governments and other power and interest groups. The passing on of specific skills and technologies is of course important, but secondary to the larger critical and imaginative role. In other words, doubt is the core educational curriculum - doubt of authority, tradition, established beliefs and customs; systematic, thorough and fearless doubt. Nothing is harder to impart. It is the paradox of all education: the teacher has to encourage students to doubt and disbelieve what s/he says; to question his/her, and all authority. We have to encourage students to question not only what we teach, but to question all authority, the media and advertising especially, and perhaps especially the conventional wisdom about “history” and “politics.” All institutions, like all governments, tend to establish themselves as authority structures, so the struggle to preserve the university space open to those who challenge authority – to encourage and provide refuge for heretics – is endless.

The centrality of the principle of doubt means also that self-government and maximum devolution of responsibility have to be part of university governance: citizens will not emerge from universities unless universities treat students as citizens. It is a simple point, but a radical one. Learning is best done in small groups, as shared experience, and the best pedagogy is democratic: thus the primacy of the workshop over the lecture/tutorial, and the necessity of small group learning. Self-governing faculty are also crucial if the university is to fulfill its mission of criticism, debate, and innovation.

For the university to constitute itself as the free-standing association of critical and imaginative thinkers its curricula has to include a balance between the teaching of necessary skills and techniques and the addressing of core problems of society and civilization. For me, in today’s world, these core problems would have to include the following, in something like this order:

Necessary Concerns for any 21st Century
International Education Agenda

- 1) Global collapse: ecological crisis, climate change, global warming, nature and the future of the planet;**
- 2) War: lawlessness and violence (militarism), including the cult of nuclear weapons and associated risks of catastrophe;**
- 3) Nationalism: the contest between global – earth and citizen-based - perspectives and national (or other sectarian) ones;**
- 4) Poverty: the south-north divide, the unequal distribution of wealth both within and between countries, and the principles of economic and political thought that cause it;**
- 4) Patriarchy: and all forms of gender discrimination.**

Only an international, global frame can serve to formulate such problems and explore solutions. No other social institution can replace the university – especially the internationalized university - in comprehensively and systematically addressing them. Let me say a little on these intellectual and educational agendas. Here I have to set aside the 4th and 5th points, not because they are unimportant but because in such a short span I cannot say anything meaningful about them.

1) Global Collapse

Wherever one travels on the earth in recent years, one hears, or see direct evidence of, the crisis of nature. We know that global systems are under severe pressure: the earth warms, the polar ice-caps, Himalayan glaciers and global coral reefs shrink, oceans rise, deserts advance, rainforests dwindle, water tables sink, rainfall diminishes (or comes in sudden, violent and devastating storms), fish stocks dwindle, the polar bear, the tiger (and countless other species) seem destined for extinction. Just weeks ago the world's scientists issued the UNEP's Global Environment Outlook (Geo-4)¹ which included the dire warning that the very survival of our species was at risk. Education, especially international education, has to grapple with this crisis of our shared humanity. It was significant and appropriate that the character chosen for reproduction at Kiyomizu Temple at the end of last year as the Chinese character of the year was the character for life, inochi (mei). How shall we heal the wounds of nature and re-establish a sustainable relationship between humanity and other species?

It is time, in my view, to question some of the great assumptions on which our society is built, especially that of endless growth and the primacy of the market. Consider the following figures:

¹ <http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/>

Population**Japan**

to ca 300 AD	1800	2006	2050	2100	2500
ca 300,000	35m	130m	90m	45m	?

World

1bn	6.7bn	9bn	?
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GDP – Japan*

1868	2006	2050	2100
1	ca 100	ca 440	ca 1900

***if 1868 is set as 1, and assuming 3% growth rate from 2006**

Such figures confront us with two sets of questions.

Firstly, can world population continue to grow at current rates while Japan's shrinks? No country in modern times has ever maintained a leading position in world affairs while its population was shrinking and aging. Can Japan? How will it explain to the world its exclusion of people who might wish to come here?

Secondly, can the growth paradigm to which Japan is committed really be sustained? The wisdom of American Indian tribes used to be that, when major decisions were to be made, their likely consequences for five generations into the future had to be taken into account. Japanese governments – and for that matter oppositions too, for on this there is nothing to divide them – are committed to maximizing economic growth rates. That is taken to be the main goal of government. The current government aims at 3%. Yet can we imagine the consequence if they were to accomplish that? What would it mean to achieve the 19 *times* increase in materials and energy and wastes that would occur just within the span of the remaining years of this century, i.e. roughly five generations, let alone the astronomical figures that a projection beyond that would entail?

In short, humanity heads for disaster to the extent that current US and Japanese models of production, consumption and waste are continued. It is an uncomfortable fact for education, and international education, to face. yet in thinking this through it seems to me that Japanese history might also offer an important, positive lesson. Edo Japan, the Japan of the 18th century in particular, constitutes a rare, possibly unique, world historical model of zero-emission, maximum recycling, sustainability (under conditions of high literacy and education, and sophisticated urban culture). In the long term, its lessons may be more apt for the future of humanity than the high growth, high waste decades of the late 20th century and early 21st.

Conventional market capitalism has no answer to such civilizational crisis, and it is to our universities that we must look for answers, for a new paradigm. Yet international education in general seems much more closely attached to, and rooted in, the models of the unsustainable 20th than the sustainable 18th century.

Surrounded as we are by the assumptions of permanent growth and maximizing of consumption, I would add that the lesson that lies at the heart of the education experience, but which is most difficult to impart, is the profoundly subversive one that the greatest of human pleasure comes from creation rather than consumption – creation whether of a painting, a novel, a sentence, a chair, a garden, the making of things, or ideas. Our world is structured around the assumption that consumption is the supreme human activity, because growth is its god, the structural requirement of the capitalist market system for ceaseless expansion requires that needs be endlessly created, expanded, and maintained, but that they never be satisfied. The subversive truth at the heart of the educational process is that creative activity, especially the creation of beauty, is the highest purpose of life.

2) War

War is the major industry in the world – the production, distribution, and use of people-killing instruments and technologies and of the ideologies that sustain and justify it. The 20th century saw a massive increase in state-led violence, and a huge increase in the proportion of victims of war who were civilians rather than professional soldiers. Lawlessness spreads, even, or perhaps specially, on the part of those who bear the greatest obligation to uphold the law.

Democratic nations are the main spenders, supporters, and propagators of this system, and one country alone outweighs the rest of the world. Indeed, such are the distortions of the international order that it not only accounts for an overwhelmingly high proportion of global militarization, and in very recent times launched a major war in defiance of international law and without legal warrant, but its government also struggles to justify abduction, torture, and assassination, stockpiles and refines nuclear weapons and threatens to use them, and refuses to consider its obligation under the Non Proliferation Treaty to abolish them. It also refuses to sign the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change or to take serious steps to address deepening global crisis. Because Japan supports that country, its ally, it also shares the responsibility. Universities must strive to understand how this has come about, deepen awareness of it, and help advance a solution.

The post-1945 horror and guilt in Japan saw a brief efflorescence of anti-war resolve, culminating in the 1946 Constitution of Japan. It was a world historic attempt to spell out a new, anti-war paradigm. But the party that has governed Japan almost throughout the postwar era has been committed all along to getting rid of this clause and restoring the war-dominant paradigm. Japan's ally, the U, has long insisted on this, and the bureaucracy has long assumed that Japan must do whatever is required of it by the US because it has always benefited from doing so and because the alternative would be isolation. It is something I describe in my latest book as a "Client State" syndrome. The challenge for the present generation in Japan is to transform the relationship with the US from subservience to equality, maintaining friendship and respect, but with no guarantee of automatic support and indeed with an assurance of principled criticism where criticism is necessary, and with a plain Japanese commitment to honor its own constitution above any treaty obligation.

Japan's plans for the 21st century call for transforming the energy systems by massive commitment to nuclear technologies and materials, turning the country into a plutonium superpower. Such plans are rarely addressed by media or politicians, and almost as rarely by universities. The curriculum of any contemporary institution of international education would have to include faculties or departments or specialist scholars dedicated to understanding militarism and nuclearism, both as weapons and as ideology. Yet peace education is an unfashionable term, as if it were a sentimental indulgence in the hard, pragmatic world of globalization.

3. Nationalism

Einstein referred to nationalism as the measles of humanity. It lies at the root of war, and despite the advances of globalization and the erosion in fact of the nation state and the

subversion of the state by the globalized economy, the myths of nationalism are still powerfully deployed to mobilize and manipulate. International education must address the contest between global society networks and state and corporations. The university is the most powerful potential agent in advancing the globalization of democracy.

For long, there has been talk in Japan of a crisis in the school education sector. Bullying, desertion, collapse of classes, suicide, violence and juvenile crime are cited as evidence of crisis. Bureaucrats and conservative thinkers attribute this crisis to the loss of national pride and identity. They believe that individual rights have been overemphasized and social and national purpose neglected. Consequently, they call for enforcement of the principles of public spiritedness and morality (*dotokushin*) and especially of love of country, and they demand textbooks that will somehow inculcate a sense of “national pride” and a “correct” understanding of history.

Flag and anthem rituals have become increasingly part of this process. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government in 2003 issued an explicit directive that flag and anthem rituals be carried out at school commencement and graduation ceremonies. Many teachers refused to comply, and were subjected to disciplinary measures, pay cuts and temporary suspensions. Governor Ishihara Shintaro’s nominee on the Board of Education, Toriumi Iwao, former president of Marubeni, insisted that there could be no relenting. “Unless we thoroughly extirpate [those opposed to the flag and anthem rituals] the root of evil will persist, especially since this cancer has been left to fester for fifty years. We have to uproot it so that no trace remains, otherwise it will replicate.” Inspectors were dispatched around the schools to video-tape the proceedings of school ceremonies, reporting teachers whose mouths did not open during the singing, recording the levels of the vocal output (low, medium, full-throated). In some schools, chairs were removed, so that teachers opposed to the routine would have no place to sit. In Kitakyushu, the local Department of Education further specified that all staff and students must not only stand for the anthem but they must sing “sincerely” (*tadashiku kokoro o komete*), precisely the formula used in the 1930s to specify the way students under the Meiji Constitution had to sing the very same anthem as part of their state Shinto, emperor-worshipping education. Such centralizing and intrusive “reforms” were at odds with the guarantees of freedom of thought and conscience in the constitution and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are narrowly nationalist, rather than internationalist.

Eventually, hundreds of teachers sued the Tokyo Metropolitan Government under the Constitution’s Article 19 (on freedom of thought and conscience) and in September last year a district court issued a dramatic, landmark judgment holding the Government directive to be in breach of the constitution, insisting that teachers had no obligation to stand and sing, and noting that the flag and anthem had indeed been “the spiritual backbone that supported imperialism and militarism until the end of World War 11.” After that, however, in December 2006, the Japanese Diet adopted a new Fundamental Law of Education. Its agenda was described by its supporters as “cleansing” the 1947 law of liberal, universalist, democratic influences and restoring nationalism, tradition, and morality to centre place. Students would be required by law to cultivate “an attitude that respects tradition and culture, loves the nation and homeland that have fostered them.”

With this law, “love” of country becomes a core moral virtue and a legal requirement. It is something that even militarist governments in the past had never demanded, much less required by legislation. The new law must throw into doubt the import of the court judgement.

Former Prime Minister Abe in particular insisted that the state be loved, and Japan’s top business leader, Keidanren chief Mitarai Fujio, agrees, saying that Japanese workers should love *both* their country *and* their corporations.² That is the agenda to which, from 2007, state and capital have been jointly committed. It is hard to think of any other country in the early 21st century where citizens and workers were being required to love their state and their employers, with one exception - North Korea, Japan’s neighbor and in so many respects its polar opposite.

For decades, the Ministry of Education has also been imposing what it calls “moral education.” Confidential personal reports are compiled on each middle school student (*naishinsho*), “lifestyle guidance” (*seikatsu shido*) directives issued on appearance, clothing, and private life, and students are required to maintain a notebook of personal record, *Kokoro no Noto* (Notebook on the Heart) recording their efforts to achieve self-discipline, concern for others, respect for the law and for superiors, and love of country. Their thoughts being then subject to scrutiny and accompanying psychological guidance from their teachers, who in turn are under Ministerial direction.

The effort to impose love of country and “correct” understandings of history leads also to bureaucratic intervention in the process of selection of school texts in history and social science. When state responsibility for the comfort women system of sexual slavery was eventually admitted in the early 1990s, a resolution of apology for colonialism and aggression passed the Diet, and textbooks began to cover hitherto untouched questions of Japan’s modern history, including the “Comfort Woman” system, it provoked a diehard movement of resistance from those who insisted on what they described as a “correct” history, centered on Japan’s pure and proud traditions. Publishers slowly adjusted their texts in order to conform.

These problems obviously concern primarily the school education sector, and are primarily national rather than international. However, the problem concerns the education sector as a whole, not least because it is the universities that train and produce teachers, the because the schools of today produce the students and universities of tomorrow; and the international implications have been profound in sowing doubt and suspicion among Japan’s neighbors about its commitment to international cooperation and its ability to share a common sense of the past and vision for the future.

Conclusion

Contrasting with the narrow nationalist and patriotic agenda that has been gaining strength in recent decades, true international education is based on a de-centering process.

² Nihon keizai dantai rengokai, *Kibo no kuni, Nihon*, 1 January 2007, <http://www.keidanren.or.jp/japanese/policy/2007/vision.pdf> discussed in Minoru Nagata (introduced by Gavan McComack), “Love your state, Love your boss: Whither Japan?” *Japan Focus*, 9 January 2006.

Students must “lose” themselves by immersion in the unfamiliar, through physical relocation to other cultures and systematic immersion in other languages and ways of thinking. Till now globalized citizenship has required of almost everybody that they learn English. That will continue at least for the foreseeable future, but as this century proceeds it is bound to mean Chinese too.

International education shifts the perspective on the world so that we come to be able to see ourselves as the product of distinctive social, historical, and cultural conditioning – as others see us, with values and preconceptions that are not absolute but the product of our communities of origin and our historical era. It calls for opening everything to doubt, questioning one’s own identity, and opens our minds and hearts to sympathetic understanding of the minds and hearts of others. It involves seeing ourselves in a fresh light, relativized. Nationalism and insistence on so-called “correct” views of history are antithetical.

The democratic and universalist frame of citizenship, justice and human rights is articulated in Japan through the Constitution, the Fundamental Law of Education, and various international covenants and commitments. The Fundamental Law has now been revised, the constitution is under great pressure, and a gap opens between legal and constitutional principle and social and political practice. Universities, perhaps especially through their international education programs, are at the forefront of the struggles on all these issues.

Ultimately, the universities have to seize leadership in addressing the common problems of humanity, helping build the networks of international civil society that will, that must assert popular authority over states and corporation. They must chart a course for the survival of humanity and the earth, outlaw war, and construct a global citizenship in which all human beings can live in dignity and security.