

New Education & Fukuzawa's Legacy at Keio SFC (Part 2)

By Mukesh WILLIAMS

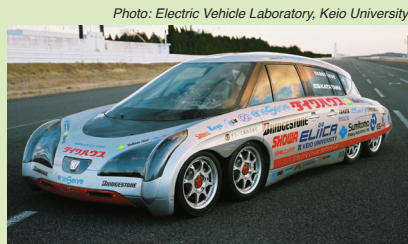


Author Mukesh Williams

Creating Projects through Inter-Disciplinary Fusion

The founder of Keio University, Yukichi Fukuzawa (1834-1901), realized that progressive ideas, connecting education with society, were necessary to create a modern and powerful Japan. After 150 years his ideas still thrive at Keio University's relatively new campus called SFC. Established in 1990, SFC champions a borderless education which brings together disparate disciplines, methods and ideas to create both cutting-edge and innovative education in Japan. Both *jitsugaku* (real education) and *rashisa* (inter-disciplinary education) have been the ideological underpinnings of innovative projects and circles at SFC such as the Eliica car project, Acadex school project, personal history documentary project, cyber-sound project, remote collaborative conferencing projects, POM 2 circle, India circle, and others. Many of these projects and circles integrate various disciplines and create new areas of research such as environmental technology, electric vehicle designing, school construction architecture, media design, visual-and-music design, cyber-sound, personal digitalized histories, and socio-demography.

1) Electric Sedan & Bus Project

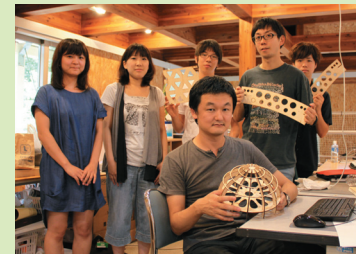


Eliica Sedan

The Electric Vehicle Lab run by Professor Hiroshi Shimizu has been instrumental in developing not only a prototype of an electric sedan called Eliica (or Electric Lithium-Ion Car) but also an electric bus in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and other industrial organizations. In order to develop the 8-wheel Eliica sedan with a maximum speed of 230 mph, Professor Shimizu's lab cooperated with 38 industrial enterprises to help him and his students develop an environmentally friendly, safe, high-performance car. Fired by the success of the project, the Electric Vehicle Lab is now developing a noise-free and emission-free electric bus with an integrated platform in collaboration with Isuzu Motors and the Kanagawa Prefectural Government. The "in-wheel motor" system where motors are placed inside the wheels and new car technology where lithium-ion batteries are mounted under the vehicle floor allow for the total use of the interior floor space. Also the flat interior is easy for elderly passengers to use.

2) Acadex Elementary School Project in DR Congo

Professor Simone Bedelo initiated the idea of starting a private elementary school in Kinshasa that was later called Acadex Elementary School, short for Academic Excellence Elementary School.



Professor Matsubara with students

In 2009 the Japanese Language Lab of Yoko Hasebe and the Architectural Design Lab of Hironori Matsubara got together to realize this project. Hasebe Lab dealt with designing the curriculum and teaching Japanese through the English language, while Matsubara Lab was engaged in designing the construction materials and architectural design of the school itself. The unique combination of language and architecture was possible only at SFC. The combination of hard and soft concepts and getting students involved in the actual architectural designing of the school required innovative ideas. One of them was that the buildings of the school could be used for multiple things—classroom teaching, weekend theater and a museum. In order to keep the cost of construction down, the walls of each building were made from sun-dried blocks while the roof employed a wooden truss system. The project will be completed in six years.

3) POM2 Circle

POM2 Circle (or "The Problem of Mines is a Problem of Mine") is a student group at SFC that sells stickers to remove landmines in Thailand. It has 16 members from different



POM 2 Circle

classes in SFC and meets once a week to plan events and join charity donation efforts. Its members often visit Thailand to get firsthand information on landmines. It is an excellent example of SFC-rashisa as it integrates different disciplines and brings together students from different backgrounds and interests. Students interested in international organizations, media design, landmines, map-making, and brochure design all find something interesting here. Its goal is to develop a more workable relationship between Japanese society and the removal of landmines in Thailand.

The circle first started in 2003 as a working group from one of the SFC classes but later became a part of an NPO called Socio Project Bureau that collaborates with an NGO called Peace Road Organization (PRO) founded in 2006. In 2007 the Japanese government extended financial assistance of three million yen to the Grassroots Human Security Project Scheme (GGP) for the "Clearance of Unexploded Shells and Antipersonnel Landmines in Kao Phra Vihan National Park" project, coordinated by the PRO. The donation system of POM2 involves buying a sticker that costs 300 yen. On each sticker there is a number printed that corresponds to a minefield (2m²) in Thailand. The de-mining agency in Thailand called PRO then removes the landmines according to the number on the sticker. On the website (www.jirai.org), you can check where you removed the landmines on the map. A 200-yen donation is given to PRO for their activity fund and for removing the mine (2m²). The remaining 100 yen is used for running POM2. Its leader Kanameda tells us that she is always thinking of innovative ways to take student members out of the classroom and keep them motivated.

Student Response to SFC Education

We asked the following questions to some of the students at SFC to measure the uniqueness of education and its international reach.

1. How do you see your role as a world leader?
2. How do you wish to project Keio in Japan and the world?
3. How do you wish to realize your goals?
4. What is unique about your goals?
5. How do you include international students in your class?
6. How has SFC contributed in helping you realize your goals?

The following are some of the integrated responses of students, in their own words, highlighting the ways that SFC education has helped them to acquire both academic skills and a global perspective:

1) Haruka Kiyoto, graduate student, Media & Governance

"At SFC we don't just study at a desk or from a book but visit the actual place of our research. I am doing research about how people in Congo can get intuitive knowledge of education and acquire ownership of educational institutions. I cannot find much information from books or the Internet. Therefore at SFC we are told to go there and see for ourselves what is going on. If I had gone to another school to study I would not have been able to go to Congo. So at SFC fieldwork is connected to our study, and study connected to our fieldwork. It is important for me to take



Haruka Kiyoto

initiative in this area, to play a leadership role. Education from this perspective becomes big. If I want to see a real connection between concept and realization I have to visit other countries. And SFC helps me

to study many different aspects of other countries. These visits abroad have inspired me to acquire a global idea. My earlier image of developing countries was both poor and disturbing. But when I went to Congo I realized that though Congolese are economically poor, they are spiritually rich. I also felt that we Japanese are 'a little poor' in mind and spirit. In terms of *yutakasa* (abundance), we Japanese have forgotten real values. We are economically rich and live a convenient life but we are not so rich spiritually any more. We have forgotten our love for family. After Tohoku we say *kizuna* (social bonds), but what is real *kizuna* we do not understand. We have forgotten the idea of *kizuna* in Japan recently. I want to introduce Congo to Japan and Japan to Congo and to show both countries that we can learn from each other and enrich our lives and society."

2) Kanameda Asami, third-year student, Policy Management

"I am a third-year student at SFC, where I have the opportunity to learn many disciples and methods to understand reality. I cannot learn this anywhere else in Japan. At Kaneko Ikuyo's Lab I study the need for social entrepreneurial community solutions and community-based network connections. Kaneko Sensei thinks that if social entrepreneurs are to succeed they must be supported by the community. He considers the community network to be social capital. At Kaneko Sensei's Lab we use the methods of both sociology and economics. In the *kenkyukai* (research lab) I study elements of business for social entrepreneurs and use a model where social returns and business returns complement each other. I have read a lot of news about money donated by people to good causes being misused or not used properly. This made me think about how we could best use donated money. When I was a high school student I learned about landmines and also heard news about mines in Thailand from my Thai friend. When I came to SFC I found a student circle called POM2 that deals with removing mines from Thailand for a small fee. POM2 conducts a campaign "Remove the Landmine with Stickers." If you buy a POM2 sticker for 300 yen you can see minefields on a landmine map cleared as a result of your donation. The different numbers are indicated on each sticker. POM2 divides the remaining area into squares so that each 2m² correspond to that number. The person who started this campaign was also an SFC student called Tanaka Kiyota. He started from a group formed in the class of Sakurada Shuzo Sensei in 2003. POM2 works under the nonprofit organization called Socio Project Bureau, in which Sakurada Sensei works as a director. As a leader, I need to not only drive POM2 members to achieve their vision, but also satisfy the stakeholders in the activity. From SFC I can get various viewpoints. Students can study every branch of knowledge here. The members of POM2 are drawn from disciplines such as design, sociology, architecture, international politics, and so on. This makes SFC unique."

3) Ryo Takahashi, third-year student, Faculty of Policy Management

"I want to contribute to the growth of the Japanese economy through the expansion of Japanese products and services for emerging countries like India. So I want to be a businessperson and establish a connection between Japan and emerging



Ryo Takahashi

countries in Asia. Actually I have visited India three times on internships and on one such occasion I was at Ahmadabad for about two months and was involved in promotion and sales activities. All my three visits to India have been after I enrolled at Keio-SFC. Fortunately I'm studying India in the Kanda Seminar at Mita campus and in Dr. Mukesh Williams' English class. Dr. Williams is from India and is our only Indian teacher, who has lots of things to tell us about India. At present I realize that exchange programs between young people in Japan and India are on a very small scale. There are only 400 Indian students in Japan. For most Indian students Japan is a rather distant country. So there is a greater need for Japan-India partnership and exchange programs. About 10 or 20 years from now, a strong partnership between Japan and India will become more and more important. At this time student exchange programs between Japan and India will become very important to conduct business in both countries. So Keio University has to receive more Indian students and send more Japanese students to India, offering them financial support. In the beginning students may face some cultural and linguistic problems but that is to be expected. We are now living in a global era, so interaction with foreign students and with foreign universities will be a fruitful experience."

4) Gennai Kamata, third-year student, Environmental Information

"I think a person who can communicate with anyone in the world should be a global leader. In order to do this we need to have language skills, knowledge of different kinds of cultures, and friendship with many people. Keio SFC is a campus where different kinds of students from around the world can learn equally and amicably. SFC therefore may be called a Global Campus. Here, we cannot avoid meeting people from other countries and cultivating mutual understanding. SFC teaches us to know more about the world today than we did yesterday and to acquire different kinds of experience every day. The philosophy of meeting new challenges has helped me to get along with foreigners and know more about foreign countries. This is essential to achieve my goal of becoming a global leader. To be such a person, I have to learn about a wide range of issues around the world. This can only be accomplished here at SFC. All classes should be held in English so that students from all over the world can freely give their opinions and communicate



Gennai Kamata

with other students and teachers. Most of the classes in SFC are held in English. Friends around me, from all over the world, are all eager to study and act for society. And SFC provide us with a great diversity

of classes in many fields. This spirit of taking on challenges coupled with an international perspective will always help me to realize my goals. I feel really fortunate to be studying in such an inspiring and stimulating environment."

5) Ui Teramoto, Ph.D. student, Graduate School of Media and Governance

"I have been participating in SFC life from May 2011 and am currently doing my doctoral research on the significance of the growing Indian expatriate communities in Japan. As a newcomer, I



Ui Teramoto

have found some unique characteristics of SFC education. One distinctive aspect is that students learn various subjects as per their interest, subjects ranging from international relations, computer programming and history to business, literature and sociology. The other is that students are encouraged to use their own creative ideas and skills to join various SFC 'projects' for social improvement such as the 3.11 Project to support Tohoku Earthquake victims, a project to help Indonesian nurses get assimilated into Japanese society, and removal of landmines from Thailand. These basic methods of teaching drawn from different disciplines are also reflected in the way I am taught to conduct my research. From time to time I get guidance from an "advisory group" of professors that comprises one main supervisor and three co-supervisors. All are experts in their fields and come from different disciplines. From my main supervisor I learn about modern Japanese social structure, which helps me to reflect upon the ways the Indian expatriate community in Japan fits into the larger Japanese society. From one of my co-supervisors I learn about Japanese migration policy, interview techniques and questionnaire methods. I have come to understand that different subjects and methodologies are interconnected with understanding the Indian communities in Japan. I would like to strengthen the Japan-India partnership through my research and later as a teacher I intend to foster a new generation of leaders. I would be glad if I can enhance inter-cultural understanding between Japan and India in the long run."

SFC is a unique experiment in borderless education that builds original thinking and creativity, badly needed in Japan and the world today. Students coming from different disciplines and academic streams begin to understand the advantages of thinking across disciplines and create paradigms, artifacts and concepts that improve the lives of individuals and society at large. The collaboration between different social institutions and SFC provides the impetus for the academic institution to excel and innovate, something that Fukuzawa envisioned over a century and a half ago. Its students and faculty feel privileged to enhance its unique academic environment. **JS**

Mukesh Williams is a poet, scholar and teacher. Formerly of St. Stephen's College, he now teaches South Asian and American Studies and Academic Writing courses at Keio University, and Soka University, Tokyo.