

# New Education & Fukuzawa's Legacy at Keio SFC (Part 1)

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One hundred and fifty years ago, Yukichi Fukuzawa (1834-1901) returned from his epic journey to the West, founded the Western Studies School or Keio Gijuku (that after his death became Keio University), and wrote his famous essay on civilization, attempting to revolutionize Japanese education in the early Meiji era. Though SFC is a new campus, the history of its parent institution is relatively long. Keio University was founded in 1858 in an effort to modernize Japanese education through self-development. Its history in some sense encapsulates the modernizing of Japan.

Fukuzawa saw education as a means for national development, intellectual empowerment and character-building. So first and foremost he built a debating hall on the Mita Campus to promote debating skills, essential for citizens of a democratic nation. He saw that debating in American schools was not a forensic skill but a tool to develop character and initiative. For him the proliferation of enlightened businessmen was more important than bureaucrats. He valued Western progress and enlightenment and wanted to introduce the technological skills and social organization of the West in Japan.

He felt that it was imperative to train wise and capable leaders through a Western-style education, leaders who would one day lead Japan into the modern world. With this express intention he established Keio University. SFC today inherits both the history and the tradition of Keio University.

SFC has been true to the spirit of its founder in aggressively pursuing Fukuzawa's ideals by doing away with boundaries created by traditional disciplines and developing a new way of learning by bringing together diverse areas such as science, technology, design and policy to resolve complex social problems. This was a new interpretation of Fukuzawa's concept of *jitsugaku* or a new way of learning.

Over the years SFC has attempted to create new areas of research and globalize its education to realize the vision of its founder. Recently, under a new initiative by the Japanese government, SFC has introduced its special borderless education for both Japanese and international students that not only integrates various disciplines but also helps students to participate in actual projects in society. SFC is, therefore, pioneering a new concept of education in Japan that is both cutting-edge and innovative.



Yukichi Fukuzawa

## History of SFC Innovation

Though Keio University nurtured capable leaders for over a century, its bureaucratic and compartmentalized academic disciplines got in the way of innovation. During the bubble years of the 1980s some academics, exasperated by the academic focus on training bureaucrats or company employees, wanted a new way of education that could handle the "unstable and fluid" decade in Japanese society (Shigeru Nakanishi, *Itan-no Keifu*, 2010). They increasingly began to feel that the purpose of education was not to overburden students with an enormous amount of knowledge but to develop in them the capacity to think. Therefore, helping them develop analytical skills based on logic, reasoning, judgment and organization became the focus of the new education. Those who wanted to do innovative research and teaching felt that it would be easier to build a new campus devoted to inter-disciplinary studies than to transform the existing one.

With this aim in mind SFC was established as the fifth campus of Keio University in 1990 in Shonandai, Fujisawa. From its inception SFC refused to create traditional departments and instead established faculties to fuse disparate disciplines. It created three faculties to bring together diverse disciplines: Policy Management, Environmental Information, and Nursing and Medical Care. In order to help students pursue graduate studies it established two graduate schools, one in Media and Governance and the other in Health Management. By doing this it moved away from being a traditional university. The flipside of this innovation was that SFC was regarded as heretical.

Over the last two decades SFC has worked hard to keep problem-solving as its primary focus, harmonizing it with Fukuzawa's idea of progress and enlightenment. Nakanishi believes that though during the early years SFC enjoyed "a good reputation and respect from society," this reputation has dropped and resulted in falling student enrollment. But Nakanishi admits that SFC is still unique as it provides students with the freedom to choose from among different disciplines. Today SFC has 4,849 students, who are taught by 244 full-time teachers. Once again SFC is endeavoring to establish a more global campus by participating in MEXT Global 30, which aims at teaching 300,000 international students in Japan.

## SFC GIGA Program

To help MEXT realize its ambitious target, SFC has evolved the GIGA Program for undergraduate foreign students. The program brings together info-communication technology and governance to conduct 124 credit courses in English from September 2011. It aims to teach courses in technology, engineering, mathematics and sciences, buttressing them with basic knowledge of international relations, development studies, political science and language. After completing the course in four years, students will be awarded a BA degree from the Faculty of Environment and Information Studies. Students and departments at SFC are now preparing to welcome international students through various programs. One such program that stands out is the Onigiri Project by students from the Freedman Lab, who intend to teach different aspects of Japanese culture to international students in English.

The GIGA program at SFC is especially advantageous to most foreign students as all courses are being taught in English. So basically students do not need any prior knowledge of the Japanese language, a barrier that most foreign students find hard to overcome. Professor Jun Murai, Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Information, explains:

“The Japanese university system hasn’t been able to develop instruction through English. English has become a standard and global language. So in order to overcome this shortcoming we at SFC decided to conduct instruction in English. We will start our international GIGA program from September 2011 with 15 students from around the world including the US, India, Korea, China and Southeast Asia. They will be coming without any Japanese ability and will be able to develop purely computer and science-related undergraduate skills through the English language. We will also support these students through scholarships such as HUT, which is supported by JAICA.”

Apart from international students, SFC also has returnee students and Japanese students who speak a variety of languages on campus. SFC makes efforts to attract a cross-section of students by conducting entrance examinations twice a year, in both spring and fall. Only recently some universities in Japan have begun to follow this example to tide over the crisis of falling student numbers. But SFC has been doing this for decades. According to Professor Murai, conducting admissions twice a year is “rather hard”



*A new-style class in English, Lamda 301*



*Keio SFC campus*

but “this way we can get all the students from abroad who are willing to come to SFC.” This willingness on the part of SFC is quite important as it creates “an international mind” and gives SFC a higher ratio of international students than most universities. This linguistic and cultural globalization holds a “very special power” in the Japanese education system, which is rather insular.

## The Concept of SFC Rashisa-ism

SFC internationalization and innovation can be represented through the concept of *SFC-Rashisa*. This abstract term is both a buzzword and an ideology at SFC and may be roughly translated as inter-disciplinary study, unique education, collaboration, independence, innovation, practical education and sustainable relationship. The concept of SFC-Rashisa-ism may take many shapes such as “facing real issues with basic inter-disciplinary study” (Professor Jun Murai, Environmental Information), a desire to “create our own future” (Professor Jiro Kokuryo, Policy Management), “go beyond traditional academic disciplines and methodology” (Professor Hideyuki Tokuda, Media and Governance) or “use cutting-edge technology and become international” (Professor Manami Fujikura, Environmental Information). Professors like Shoko Miyagawa from the Faculty of Nursing and Medical Care feel that *SFC-Rashisa* motivates teachers to resolve problems together with organizations, shareholders and students “without being caught up in a conventional framework.”

Professor Murai explains that SFC-Rashisa-ism is an “intense way to study” the real thing through inter-disciplinary subjects and the ability to connect such study to practical situations. The attempt at SFC has always been to connect “real issues” in society with what we study. In his own words:

“We have undergraduate juniors to Ph.D. seniors living on the same campus. Even the undergraduate students here have the opportunity to encounter



*Professor Jun Murai*



very interesting research activities, which usually does not happen elsewhere. New students can go directly to conduct research at SFC and get experience through internships and fieldwork. We believe in allowing our students to experience real issues together with their basic study. We must understand that solving any issue today needs a diversity of methods, approaches and disciplines. You need to run a language program, technology courses, and media studies program and use a host of methodologies in order to resolve a real problem in society. Facing the real issue is the key factor at SFC. This to my mind is the core of SFC-Rashisa-ism. In the 20 years of SFC history we are proud of generating real research that can be useful to society. The Internet is one such aspect that has changed life in Japan. Also, the electric car Eliica is a product of this campus. Though we face real issues on a world scale we are determined to overcome many of these issues by connecting actual space with global space."

Photo: Author



Associate Professor Yoko Hasebe

Associate Professor Yoko Hasebe from the Faculty of Environmental Information endorses this view. She feels that SFC-Rashisa also means innovation, to do something new by combining different disciplines into one system and collaborating with others. According to her, at SFC everyone has the freedom to do things and, if they wish, to get help from others. She

explains her perception of the SFC academic climate as follows:

"I always want to provide a good atmosphere to students and a place where they can undertake challenging research and realize their potential. Everyone should have a strong connection with organizations in society. If this does not happen, SFC has no reason to exist. SFC-Rashisa is something to realize in the midst of society. Our campus is located in a remote area in Fujisawa. So we must go into society and realize something with local people and bring something back to SFC. Then we should concentrate on real research. But before starting on this research we have to experience almost the same experience as others in society. Students and faculty must spend lots of time in society. Our *kenkyu shitsu* (laboratory) is literally in society itself. In the midst of society we experience suffering and failure. Often we have the risk of failing. But through these hard experiences, coupled with creativity and a desire to realize something significant, we can go our own way to realize innovative research. We can then arrange innovative things and send students into society."

However, the term SFC-Rashisa is not accepted without some criticism. Professor Shinichi Ueyama from Policy Management believes that undoubtedly SFC is a "top-notch institution but the word SFC-Rashisa has become a "jargon term." Though the word implies "uniqueness" and "difference" it leaves us rather complacent as we forget to reflect upon

reality. He advises SFC not to use the word on campus as it could lead to "brain freeze." In contrast, he believes that the worth of the university is measured by the quality of its graduates. SFC is "both a battlefield and a production site" to nurture "second- and third-generation Fukuzawas." He believes that there should be a greater emphasis on Fukuzawa's concept of real learning (*jitsugaku*).

## Fukuzawa's Concept of *Jitsugaku*

The concept of *jitsugaku* is a neo-Confucian term incorporated by Fukuzawa into Japanese ethics, which empirically and roughly corresponds to Carl Popper's idea of 'situational logic.' It implies new ways of thinking and learning, something we would refer to as empirical reason or science. The concept of *jitsugaku* shifts the focus of emphasis from ethics (*rinki*) to protecting people by reorganizing society (*keisei saimin*). Professor Atsushi Seike, President of Keio University, explains that *jitsugaku* stands for public knowledge or the ability to evaluate the significance of things and inculcate a morality which involves good behavior and care for others. For SFC student Asami Kanameda, *jitsugaku* involves taking students out of the classroom and connecting them with real-life situations in society. In effect *jitsugaku* is a fusion of Confucian values and Western learning.

SFC graduates find SFC's educational philosophy of *Rashisa-ism* and *jitsugaku* both fascinating and challenging. Using these twin concepts, they are able to develop the ability to synthesize diverse fields of knowledge and apply them to real social issues. Both students and faculty are encouraged to collaborate with industrial and governmental organizations to conceptualize and complete their unique projects. SFC develops an awareness amongst students and researchers to develop a noble character and fine intellect and find new ways to work for the betterment of society and not see education as an end in itself. It is no coincidence that the reverse side of the 10,000-yen bill has an image of a phoenix, which, apart from other things, stands for ushering in a new era and doing good deeds.

Photo: Author



SFC student Asami Kanameda

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