

Trip to Okinawa
(November 23 to 26, 2007)
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The first time I received an email from Hasegawa San about the trip to Okinawa, a smile comes out from my lips. What bears in my minds was the opportunity to go to Okinawa to attend an international conference. There are lots of things that come into my mind, just thinking what will be the conference all about. As days passed, more email comes from International Christian University (ICU) about the trip for us to be aware of which place are we going to stay and what is the conference all about.

A day before the trip, November 22, 2007, a meeting was held at the Educational Research Building II with Hwang Sensei, Hasegawa San and his staff, and other nine (9) JDS Fellows, as the main participants for the 18th Annual Conference of the Japan Society for International Development. Different questions regarding with the trip was raised in order to clarify some participant's concern and the arranged schedule of the two-day conference.

Early in the morning of November 23, all JDS Fellows and Hasegawa San met at Musashi-sakai eki station and went together at Haneda Airport. Few hours more, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the plane started to fly going to Naha Airport. All of us were excited as I can see it on their face, too.

All of us seat near the window that is why we saw Fuji San surrounded by beautiful clouds reflected by different colors coming from the sky. It was amazing to see the snow at the top of the mountain and I can feel that I am so near with Fuji San, actually, it was my first time to see the mountain since I arrived here in Japan.



When we arrived at Haneda Airport, as a group, we usually checked each other to know if we are complete. After riding in a taxi, we finally arrived at Okinawa Kariyushi Ryukyu Hotel Naha. Again, I saw the kindness of the Japanese people as they accommodated us as soon as we arrived in the hotel.



We went to our assigned room and went out for a dinner as we are hungry already. After having a good dinner together, some of our colleagues went back to the hotel but I, my friend Marinor, Zaya, Aziz, and Bai took a walk around the hotel. We saw the beauty of Okinawa at night and feel the spirit of Christmas as we saw the Christmas Tree lightened.

We took some pictures and I saw again the smile in their lips. We end up the day with laughter as we went back to our hotel rooms and took a rest as we all of us knew that tomorrow is the start of the international conference.



Early in the morning, after taking a good breakfast with other colleagues, we went to Okinawa University to register and we met some participants and speakers. We looked into the schedule and we sat in one room and listened to the discussion.

Topics are interesting but we encountered problem, the language. We found out that even if

the research paper and the power point presentation were written in English, the discussion and questions was in Nihongo. So, even if we have questions and we want to participate, we can not do it since we don't understand much of their conversations. We are little upset, too, that we are nine (9) participants from ICU, yet, they don't even provide an English interpreter for us but they are kind enough to provide a sign-language interpreter to a deaf and mute participant.

Yet, during the discussion, there are more things I realized even if, most of it was discussed in Nihongo. Some of it was the presentation style of the researcher, making their outline, the content of their paper and how it was discussed, and most of all, how the panel criticized the paper and the way the researcher discussed his paper.

The 18th Annual Conference of the Japan Society for International Development is a good ground for the researcher but it is better that if they knew there are international students participating, they could provide interpreters, too. Language problem hindered their objective to spread the knowledge or the information to other nationalities. Even if we want to make the discussion internationally, we can not since participant like us can not understand it.

Of course, critics helped the researcher to make their paper more comprehensive. The suggestions of participants were a good point for the researcher to discuss more interesting points he/she may overlooked while conducting the research. The discussion as a whole is an opportunity for both parties to know the significance of the study and how to elaborate it more in order to meet the objective of the research. It also developed the researcher's personality as he/she faced a big number of participants and panel. I believed that it is common to expect the unexpected things to happen during the presentation and that reminds me to be ready when the time comes that I also need to present my own research paper.

Moreover, as I went along with the topics presented, I realized that there are many topics to be discussed as part of a research like on the value of education, problems on policies, reality of the situation, and how a country is doing right now. The conference is a ground for all of us who participated to further understand the different faces of the government policies and how the stakeholders were affected and acted on it.

In research, we learned a lot of things. We are not making it to comply for any school requirement or any programs where we are involved but to show what is our concern as an individual, as a common citizen, as part of the government, and most of all as a member of the international community. We may be a common participant

right now, but as I reflected to myself, sooner or later, I can make changes on the organization where I belong with the knowledge I learned from here.

Changes must start within me before I encourage others to follow. I may not be the decision maker but I can make recommendations. I may be a follower right now, but as days passed, I can be a leader. I am optimistic even if I can not change the whole system ideally, yet, I have the opportunity to initiate actions one by one.

On the other hand, after two days conference, with the assistance of Hasegawa San, we roamed around Okinawa and taste their different foods. Okinawa has similarities to the Philippines as we saw tropical fruits and some souvenir items, mostly from the Philippines. In this scenario, I remembered how great my country because of its natural resources is.



We also went to different places as part of the tour, like the Shuri Castle Park, Okinawa World and Okinawan Prefectural Memorial Museum and a beach in Okinawa. During this trip, I appreciate how beautiful Okinawa is.

We learned some of the history of Okinawa especially during and after the World War II. We saw how the Japanese government preserved the natural resources especially the Gyokusendo Cave. We also saw the place of the emperor which was a huge place.



There are other things I learned from this Okinawa trip, that is the value of friendship from my other JDS Fellow from Philippines, Uzbekistan, Mongolia and China. I also met student from Kobe University, Yogo San and a lady from Vietnam, Ai My. I learned more about their country, about their beliefs, about their

government system, economy, and most of all, about their people. We just chat during break time and it was good thing that some of my questions about their countries were answered and this is what we called informal way of education. We discussed more things about other general topics until we went up sharing our own perspectives.

Now, as we see each other around the campus, our connections become deeper as we valued the time being together during our Okinawa Trip. As we waved our hands to say goodbye and to end the day of 26th of November, I believed, it is just a start of a good relationship which I will treasure forever.

Learning may be varied in different ways but as an individual, as a scholar, the most important thing is how you applied and valued it. ☺