

MEXT Super Global High School

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In March 2014, Showa was appointed an Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry (MEXT) Super Global High School - a five-year program which embraces far ranging concepts to allow Japanese schools to further reach out to the global community.

Showa is one of 56 schools chosen to participate in this pioneering educational venture. In particular, we are proud that Showa is one of the few girls schools that successfully completed the selection process.

The leaderships skills development program

The high school is collaborating with the university, Japanese companies and leading experts to create an improved model for developing youth leadership skills. The aim of the current project is to identify the challenges that women encounter when embarking on a career path in Japan. In order to overcome the challenges they face, we need to encourage decision making and also embrace global awareness by encouraging a sense of cooperation and group interaction among peers. The curriculum is designed to offer the tools and resources to develop leadership skills in tandem with the established learning outcomes in the Showa curriculum (see page 30).

Our objectives

Showa tries to help students develop a range of global interaction skills in cooperation with higher learning institutions and prominent Japanese companies. Through multi-faceted program development, the aim is to further develop students innate abilities to become proactive globally aware leaders in the future.

Essentially, the objectives will be realized through encouraging a developed international awareness, global learning initiatives and a higher sense of humanity nurtured within an enhanced cognitive framework. These outcomes will be achieved through research questionnaires and interviews, development reports and oral presentations, cultural festivals and school briefings, and an English web site that allows wider access to understanding students' intended outcomes.

The career design development project

The course is helping the students to develop career design skills. In order to achieve this aim, the students are looking at profiles of successful women in the workplace and their career paths, giving them the chance to reflect on their career design preparation and acquire the initiative necessary to be potential global leaders.

Within the above context, the students have been studying the gender gap issue in the Japanese workplace, awareness being the first step. This gap has lead some women to seek opportunities overseas, and we also look at those experiences and see how they achieved their aims. In addition, the situation for women in emerging economies is linked to their social situation and Showa students visit communities in Thailand and Cambodia to assess what progress is being made by those women in their communities.



LABO Research Projects

LABO ONE - Exploring women in the workplace

Charleston, South Carolina

In the summer, from July 20th to July 30th, six first year high school students belonging to the Super Global High School (SGH) Labo One group went to the United States and spent eleven days on campus at Ashley Hall, a private girls' school in Charleston, South Carolina.

The mornings were taken up with classes, accompanying Ashley Hall students to their lessons or participating in research workshops to better develop an understanding of the role of women in the American workplace. The afternoons were devoted to fieldwork activities associated with the school's Women In Leadership program. Since the group was rather small, there were more than enough opportunities for the students to develop their communication skills.



was time spent outside of school hours with the Ashley Hall girls sightseeing, canoeing and dolphin watching while getting to know each other better.

Since Labo One's research focus is to look at women in the workplace, the students went to a restaurant that is managed and run by women, and interviewed the staff about their work choices. In addition, there was a tour of the Magnolia Plantation, and a prayer meeting at a local church adding further cultural insight to their visit. The most rewarding event at Ashley Hall was the panel discussion featuring school alumna, doctors, lawyers and the school's vice principal. Naturally, there



There was also a tour of the Boeing Dreamliner 787 assembly plant in Charleston, and a question and answer session about Boeing's approach to equal opportunity in the workplace. Women who work at the facility, and also the Boeing Research & Technology Center nearby were on hand to offer insight into the benefits of working at a large global company. Since Japanese technology and craftsmanship plays an important part in Boeing's manufacturing process, our students could appreciate how important the relationship between The U.S. and Japan is to both countries.

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The girls came back to Japan with the realization that the purpose of communication is not perfect language skills, rather to develop the tools required to interact and get the message across in a functional communicative way.

Scandinavian countries are models of social welfare, and we are visiting Finland where the gender gap is one of the narrowest in the world, this year Finland is ranked in the top five - along with four other Scandinavian countries. We can learn a lot from Finnish social practises, and also their approach to education, where Finland is considered a model country.

If you are visiting Finland, then the middle of summer is probably the best time if you want to see the Finns at their active best. We are visiting Helsinki for five days in August, and since the summer holidays begin in early June we find the students and teachers are preparing for school after a glorious ten week summer break.

Through the Council for Gender Equality's TANE program, women and men have to share the same employment opportunities. This allows women to participate fully in the workforce, and their children are cared for with the support of the state from an early age. Since child care and education is free, there are few hindrances for women to fully participate in the workforce, and indeed they are expected to be equally contributing members of Finnish society.



We will be developing our research with attention to Finland's unique *neuvola* program. Essentially, from the time the mother falls pregnant, the state has strategies in place for her, and her husband. Both are actively involved from the early stages of pregnancy, and fathers are expected to take an equal role in raising the child. Indeed, when the child is born, there are three books given to the family to read, one for the mother, one for the father, and one for the baby - with lots of pictures!



We're looking forward to developing an exchange relationship with a fellow UNESCO Associated School, the Helsinki Upper Secondary School of Languages - an international school. Since our research area is gender equality, we're hoping that we can learn more about the gender approach and develop an understanding of Finnish education from the students who come from a variety of cultures, nations and backgrounds, and share the challenge to communicate in English - the global language.

LABO THREE - Women taking the initiative in developing countries

Cambodia

After some workshops conducted by Showa Women's University's International Studies lecturer Ms Yukiko Yonekura, a group of seven students and three teachers left for Cambodia in mid-August.

During their four day visit, they toured the Japan International Volunteer Center's Phnom Penh facility where young Cambodians are getting on the job experience with car maintenance and repair, among other skills designed to help them enter the workforce with some of the necessary hands-on skills.



The main focus of the research trip was to talk to some Japanese who, through developing employment opportunities and industries are working to help Cambodians enter the workforce.

The first person they talked to was Hironobu Kurata, who established a company called Kurata Pepper. Since visiting Cambodia as a young volunteer in the 1990s, he has made it his mission to give Cambodian women long-term employment opportunities - in this case reviving the once world-renown pepper brand.

Yukie Yamazaki first came to Cambodia almost 20 years ago and what began as a translation service, soon expanded to become a free newspaper called Nyonyum ('smile' in the local Khmer language) since, like most developing countries, modern communication networks are yet to be fully realised. Also, Ms Yamazaki has opened the Nyonyum Shop, a number of retail outlets that sell handmade local art, crafts and food, bought directly from sources all over Cambodia.

Affectionately known as Madam Sachiko, Ms Sachiko Kojima established Angkor Cookies as a business to give Cambodians with only a basic education, a chance to explore employment opportunities beyond their rural farm community. The firm was established in 2004 and now, over ten years later, it employs more than ninety local people in retailing, manufacture and support services for a wide variety of food and drink produce; not only cookies. As Ms Kojima proudly states, "100% made in Cambodia".



LABO FOUR - Women achieving their rightful place in remote communities Chiang Rai, Thailand



Possibly the closest destination to Japan, the Labo Four expedition was in reality, the most distant and challenging of all. The group of seven students, accompanied by two teachers, ten university students and Professor Korogi from SWU left Narita on August 22nd and after changing planes in Bangkok, took a domestic flight to Chiang Rai. The locally based Mirror Foundation is an NGO working to help local people, many of whom are stateless. Chiang Rai Province shares its border with communities in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Although local villages lack most facilities we accept as a part of day to day life in Japan, the people have a quality of life that challenged our students perception of what is important in life. Sleeping in raised huts without bathing facilities, evenings spent quietly chatting with gestures and being awoken at daybreak by roosters greeting the day made for a whole new world for the girls.

A visit to an elementary school was especially fulfilling, interacting with children eager to share and learn from their visitors from Japan. Our girls enjoyed playing games and sharing an appreciation of varied cultures, while the children rewarded the girls by being eager learners of Japanese, writing their names in hiragana and learning about kanji.



Our students found that The Mirror Foundation was expending most of its energy and funding helping the stateless children, many of whom are from the Karen groups and often refugees from the border area in Myanmar. With almost no developed industries in the area, unemployment for those not working in subsistence industries is very high.

Everyone came back to Japan with a conviction to do more for those not so far away from us, and a sense of gratitude that we have such varied opportunities at home and abroad. It

only seems appropriate that the Chiang Rai group committed themselves to their ongoing mission to make dreams come true. By sharing with the people the belief that we should have a dream, and offer hope in what for many is an almost hopeless situation, our students have laid the groundwork for the next step - and everyone is looking forward to the next visit to help the Mirror Foundation open windows for those who now have hope and dare to dream of finding a better place in the world.