

Report of trip to find out about Japanese Youth Education System

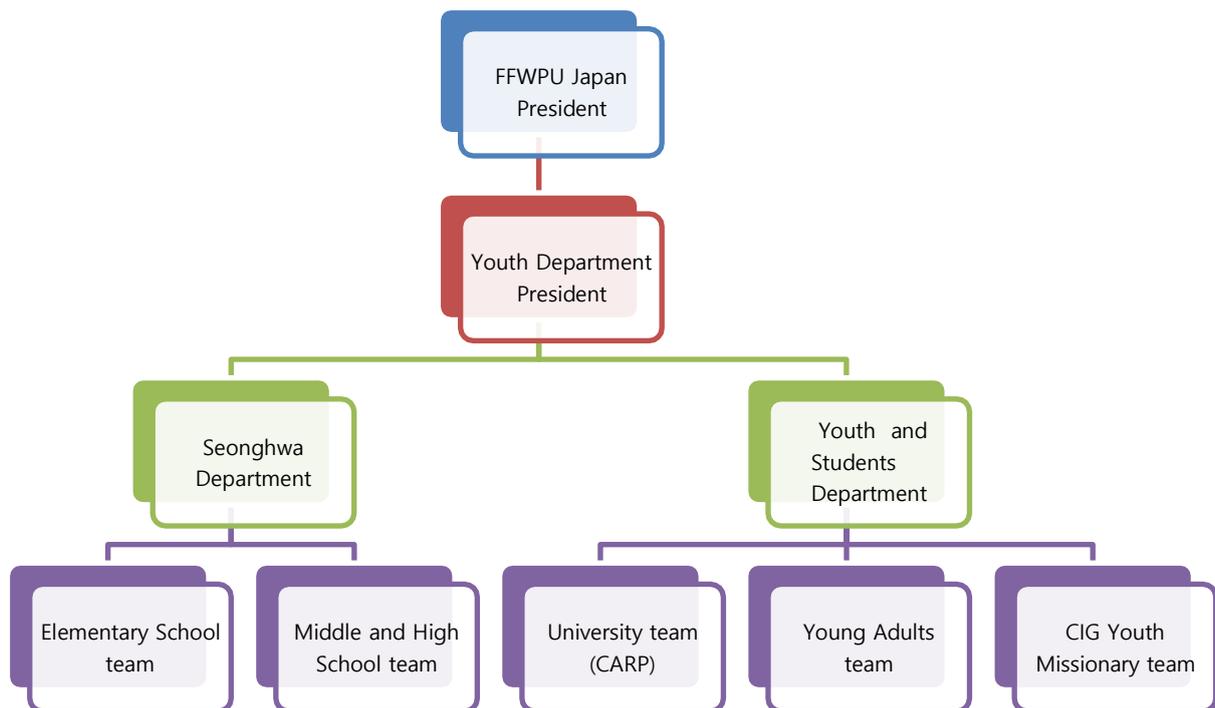
August 22nd to 25th 2019

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A few months ago we had the idea to visit Japan to learn about their education system for Blessed Children and find out whether they had any good practices we could adopt in the EUME region as well. Thus we took the opportunity to visit Japan for four days following the events in Korea around True Father's Seunghwa anniversary.

During our visit we had five meetings on three days, each with a different person/team focusing on a different age group: the pre-school age (including a memorable visit to a BC kindergarten), the elementary school age, middle and high school age, university students and young adults, and finally CIG Youth Missionaries.

The overall structure of the Japanese Youth Department is as outlined in the graph below.



The mission of the Japanese Youth Department is to educate and support all Blessed Children in Japan from age 0 to 48 (their eldest 2nd gen). The Youth Department and its president, Hiroaki Takeuchi, work under FFWPU Japan President Rev. Eiji Tokuno and thus also in close alignment with the needs of the providence. The Youth department is further divided into two departments: the Seonghwa department for elementary, middle and high school aged children, and the Youth

and Students department for young adults, university students and youth missionaries. The kindergarten for Blessed Children also operates under the Youth Department. These departments are largely responsible for developing materials, preparing larger workshops and educating *Field Educators* – 1st and 2nd gen that are running the practical youth work in the communities. Field Educators have certain requirements, such as passing a divine principle exam and receiving training from the youth and students department. Most of the Field Educators receive some financial compensation from their community as well. The Japanese Youth Department has educated Field Educators for 15 years and by now they have several thousand people educated to take care of BCs. These FEs have now created a safe and stable environment for BC education.



Furthermore, the Youth Department interacts closely with the Blessed Family department over themes such as the Blessing and support for young parents about raising children. They also have strong ties to YSP (Youth and Students for Peace) which is a separate organization from FFWPU though its activities occasionally overlap with those of the FFWPU Youth Department.

The Japanese youth education is focused on helping the youth to fulfil the three blessings. Hence they have three areas of education:

1. Shimjeong education (awareness of being God's child)
2. Pure love education (awareness of healthy relationship with brothers and sisters)
3. Helping youth to find and develop their skills, talents and dreams (awareness of purpose in the world)

(This model of education is based on Unification Thought which puts forth three areas of education: education of Heart, education of Norm and education of Dominion) They have a clear purpose and curriculum in each education area for each age group.

Upon our arrival at the headquarters of the Japanese movement on August 22nd we were warmly received by the Japanese Youth Department core team and ushered to greet the Japanese national leader, Rev. Eiji Tokuno, as well. Our meetings with the Youth Department were mainly held in the HQ building of the Japanese Youth Department, located right behind the FFWPU HQ. Our hosts were as hospitable and helpful as one would expect from the mother nation. They presented us with all of their written teaching materials, including books, DVDs and powerpoint

presentations.

Below is a summary of the meetings we had regarding the education of the different age groups (in order by age group):

The BC kindergarten – Hikari no koen



The highlight of our trip was a visit to *Hikari no koen* – a kindergarten for Blessed Children which has operated for over 40 years. We were welcomed with a heart-melting song and dance performance by about 30 of the 100 children and a group picture for which the children were competing to get into our laps. We were really moved and impressed by the brightness and joyfulness of the children. We then proceeded into a meeting with the director of the kindergarten and a teacher who had been there for more than 40 years.

They shared about the key concepts of their educational approach which were based on their lengthy experience with raising Blessed Children. Their guiding thought is that Blessed Children are children of God who have their own unique individual nature. As such, they do not push the children to follow specific behavior but allow them freedom of their original mind and let them come to understand things on their own. Otherwise, Hikari no koen operates like any other kindergarten although they do teach the children Bible stories as well about True Parents' life.

Since the kindergarten also has some non-Unificationist children, the educators can see certain differences between them and Blessed Children. Among other things BCs seem to have a stronger conscience and a stronger sense of recognizing when they have been at fault. The teachers also recognize that they themselves have learned so much from the children. The teaching staff also includes several 2nd gen members who likewise find the work valuable for their future family life.



Elementary school and education for young parents

The Japanese Youth Department recognizes that for children in elementary school and younger the most important value and faith education is the one coming from their own parents. As such, the team in charge of the elementary school age education mainly focuses on creating material for parents to use in the education of their children. They have produced several children's books, a self-reflection diary for elementary school children to fill out together with their parents and a monthly magazine called "Moon World" with cartoons, puzzles, light testimonies from members and short pieces of HDH in it.

The Youth Department does organize Sunday school and workshops for children in this age, but they play a more supportive role. They hold a yearly meeting for their Field Educators (i.e. Sunday school teachers and other educators of young children, incl. parents) where they share their experiences and good practices with each other.

Seonghwa students (middle and high school)

The middle and high school age (age 12 to 18) is seen as a crucial time to include Blessed Children in our movement's activities. If they do not develop the habit of attendance at this age, BCs will often drift away by young adulthood. Therefore there is a lot of material and activity organized for BCs in this age.

On one hand BCs are supported to uphold and build their own life of faith by using the diaries for self-reflection. The use of this diary is encouraged by monthly rewarding people who use their diary the best. Junior STF –type activities are also provided and they include workshops followed by tasks to be completed during daily life (e.g. reading hdh daily, recording your parents' life testimonies, doing exercise, studying a certain amount each day, etc.). Other material for this age group includes our own manga production and a monthly magazine for youth.

There are plenty of workshops organized for this age group as well, including workshops in the Cheonbo training center. To make it interesting for the participants, the workshop types have been given color codes based on the demandingness of the workshop (green – pink – white) and after completing such a workshop, they get a t-shirt of the respective color. In workshops and activities these colored t-shirts are like medals that the youth wear, and they are viewed with respect (similar to boy scouts having their badges).

One particular key theme the Youth Department has in their workshops is encouraging the young people to do well at school so that they can use their skills for the greater good.



University students and young adults

The core of the education for this age group is a program called the Japan Top Gun College which is based on the HyoJeong education promoted by True Mother. It is a 7-year course after high school which includes several kinds of workshops from weekend to 21-day workshops as well as CARP, STF, missionary work and others. Since they have so many programs, it is possible for the Blessed Children to the 7-year course in many different ways. They want to provide 1-on-1 guidance for BCs to find the suitable course for themselves.

In 2018 there were 843 BCs who completed this course and by now there are already 1200 Top Gun College graduates who went through the required workshops and the 7-year course. Out of the 67 churches in Japan, 48 churches are active in youth work with over a total of 3000 active college students.

CIG Missionary department

As part of the 7-year course, many BCs participate in the CIG Missionary program where they are abroad for witnessing for one year. They are sent to selected countries whose requirements include safety of the missionaries, adequate internet connection for staying in touch with HQ in Japan and existing witnessing activities that the missionaries can join. During this time they are financed by the Japanese movement which allows them to focus their time and energy on witnessing instead of fundraising (which has legal challenges). The main purpose of this one-year mission is for the youth to grow and develop themselves by supporting the realization of vision 2020.

The missionaries are taught a method called *self-counseling* which helps them to solve their internal problems through self-reflection.

Key Takeaways

All in all, we were very impressed by the Japanese Youth Department and their work. We feel that Europe (and other regions) can gain a lot from the mother nation. We hope to see more international exchanges between our regions' youth departments in the future as well! Below are the key takeaways from our trip.

Strengths of the Japanese youth education system:

- Closely aligned with True Mother and the providence ⑦ the youth develop this heart and lifestyle as well
- "One pipe" education ⑦ a young person moves smoothly from one department's care to that of the other as they grow older, and the education is well integrated
- Good cooperation with Blessed Family department, YSP, Cheon Bo training center and

other providential organizations

- Unity and cooperation within the Youth Department
- Education of Field Educators 🌀 Youth department workers in each community are well-trained and supported for their role
- Teaching materials for all levels of education
- Support material for BCs to do their own daily self-reflection and development of faith at different age

Ideas to get started with in EUME:

- Developing training for young parents about raising children
- Diary-type self-development books for youth (based on Japanese version)
- Creating a European Youth Department team and clarifying the organizational structure so that it includes national Youth Department leaders
 - ➔ Bringing the youth leaders together to give and receive: educate them but also they share their successful practices and eventually create a curriculum as a team.