

The Beginnings of Education for Ear-Handicapped Children in Japan and the Verbo-Tonal Method

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In Japan the first attempt to educate physically-handicapped children was the education of three earhandicapped children (one girl and two boys) in Kyoto in about 1873. After the Meiji Restoration (1869), the capital of Japan was transferred from Kyoto to Tokyo, but in Kyoto where education and instruction of all kinds had been cultivated for a thousand years, Mr Tashiro Furukawa, who aspired for the Restoration or any revolutionary change as a youth, and Mr Ushio Sakuma, who would become a central figure of the Democratic Movement in the Meiji era in the city of Kyoto, began to teach these earhandicapped children at the Taiken Elementary School near the Nijoh Castle. The two teachers had been entreated to teach them by Mr Denbeh Kumagai, a wholesale dealer in sugar, who as the chief of the 19th ward of the Upper Part of the City of Kyoto (*Kamigyō*) felt a great deal of sympathy for earhandicapped boys and girls living in the neighbourhood of his store who remained at home without going to school.

Those two revolutionary-minded teachers with democratic ideals apparently tried to teach the children by various methods including the integration of earhandicapped children into normal-hearing boys and girls and the use of the energy of their whole bodies, which are noteworthy from the point of view of our modern verbo-tonal method.

Mr Furukawa was given some hints from Chinese traditional medicine and thought to use the energy of the whole body of a deaf child. On the other hand, Mr Sakuma was influenced by John Stuart Mill and later by Jean Jacques Rousseau with the result that he was convinced of the correctness of integrating earhandicapped children into normal-hearing children. So much so that it seems he was against the foundation of the Kyoto deaf school (at that time united with the Kyoto blind school) as being the separation of normal hearing and earhandicapped children, for Mr Sakuma left Kyoto for his home in Miyazu, a beautiful old city in the northern part of present Kyoto Prefecture, which was a center of the Meiji Democratic Movement in the Kansai District.

In 1875 another democratic teacher influenced by Mr Sakuma, began to teach an

earhandicapped child at the *Tenkyo Gijuku* school (a private one founded by the promoters of the Meiji Democratic Movement at Miyazu). That teacher is Mr Chodo Ogasawara who later, was known by the name Shinsuke Komuro he took as the adopted son of Lord Shinobu Komuro, the prime mover behind the Democratic Movement at Miyazu, and later senator of the Meiji Regime after the establishment of the Imperial Parliament in 1890.

One year after that, when the Imperial Constitution of the Great Japan was promulgated in 1889, education for all kinds of handicapped children was regarded unproductive to the strengthening of the military and became a secondary concern of the Japanese educational bureaucracy. In Kyoto the estimate for the education of the handicapped children was sharply reduced under the pretext of the modernization of the city of Kyoto, such as the water services and the hydropower generation of electricity supplied with that water of Lake Biwa near Kyoto, which should be brought into the city through that channel, for the excavation of which an enormous sum of money had been estimated. Mr Furukawa as the first principal of the Kyoto deaf and blind school asked for a loan to cover the budget for that school, giving his own house as a pledge, so he was finally driven into making an empty promise, on account of which he was dismissed. At the same time Mr Sakuma resigned as principal of the Honnoh Elementary School in Kyoto and left there for Tokyo. He is supposed to have done so in sympathy with Furukawa.

In the process of aggressively promoting Japanese Imperialism that accompanied the growth of militarization, the concept of education for earhandicapped children which had started with Messrs. Furukawa and Sakuma, was gradually suppressed and remained so up to the end of World War II.

In the 1960s in many large Japanese cities including the city of Kyoto, special classes for children who were hard of hearing were founded one after another. Their foundation was promoted by parents who hoped for the integration of their children into society. In the process of the integration in the schools of normal-hearing children including the classes for the hard of hearing, the need for natural pronunciation of hard of hearing children has increased and is noted for the introduction of the verbo-tonal method. Now the Hard of Hearing Classes and some normal-hearing classes have not only hard of hearing pupils but also deaf ones. Under such circumstances the verbo-tonal method will be helpful to earhandicapped pupils, their teachers and parents.

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In 1981 when Professor Petar Guberina, the founder of the verbo-tonal method, came for the second time to Kyoto to give an address to the parents of hard of hearing children and their teachers, he pointed out that Mr Furukawa's method had the same quality as his

own verbo-tonal method. The author marvelled that Mr Furukawa had made his earhandicapped children pull out the roots of the trees when he wanted them to pronounce the sound 'ku'. At that time Professor Guberina said that when he wanted to make a deaf child pronounce the same sound, he usually had him lie on his back and suddenly to raise the upper half of his body to work the back muscles. Mr Furukawa also made his earhandicapped children work the same muscles.

According to Furukawa's method, it is by turning a screw that a deaf child can pronounce 'gu' easily, and that child can easily pronounce 'zu' at the same time when he throws a stone and then sees where it drops, shading his eyes with his hand. These methods were devised from Furukawa's experiences. Mr Furukawa made his deaf children take vocal exercises at the same time with chest exercises, for he thought that they could utter better sounds with improved breathing capacity.

Furukawa noticed that earhandicapped children were liable to tire, so he devised some teaching ways for them not to get tired. For example they found reading a blackboard easier when it was sometimes moved upwards or downwards, instead of fixing their eyes on an unmovable blackboard placed at the same height.

These devices were tried at this very early stage in the education of earhandicapped children, early not only for Japan but for the world. Contemporary experts of the verbo-tonal method would wonder at Furukawa's methods. Especially their proneness to tiredness should be noteworthy in terms of Japanese earhandicapped pupils nowadays, who have been thrown into the market place of capitalistic competition.

The author sometimes notices that some hard of hearing children in Japan utter very highpitched sounds probably because they are very often tense in their competitive situations. It goes without saying that the verbo-tonal method should be applied to this kind of case. But these competitive situations are prone to arrest the normal growth of the hard of hearing pupils through their integration with normal-hearing pupils. The greatest concern of Japanese parents and teachers lies in this predicament.

Under these circumstances the handicapped pupils are often driven to one of two ways: to become a juvenile delinquent and to become a dehumanized prize-pupil.

The foundation of the Hard of Hearing Classes in some cities including Kyoto is supposed to evade these evil ways, while this kind of classes in the other cities and localities have had little success, for the Hard of Hearing Classes separated from the classes of normal-hearing pupils have much the same evil with conventional deaf schools.

Now Japanese education for earhandicapped pupils calls upon their teachers and parents for fundamental new thoughts or ideas for integrating them into normal-hearing pupils and society.

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As a youth Sakuma, a democratic teacher in the Meiji era, was taught to perform his own duty in his every day life by his master, Mr Setsuan Miyahara, a poet and thinker, who belonged to the great school of Sanyo Rai, one of the greatest thinkers and men of letters in the 19th century in Japan, but who was not so active in politics as Mikisaburoh Rai, the third son of Sanyo Rai, executed as a political prisoner. Miyahara may have expected to fulfil the people's welfare, for at least Sakuma, one of his pupils, made efforts to fulfil the welfare for women and handicapped children. For the sake of the former he proposed to establish the new girls' high school in which the women in the houses of common people should be taught the subjects for general education, for at that time when he proposed such a plan in 1882, that early girls' school already founded in Kyoto in 1872, had admitted only the daughters of privileged class, who had been given mainly professional education as being necessary for becoming Japanese gentlemen's wives. But the girls' high school of Kyoto Prefecture established in 1887 after Sakuma's proposal, gave not only professional but general education to the daughters or common people. Sakuma had also given general education to the earhandicapped children at the Taiken Elementary School before the foundation of the Kyoto deaf and blind school in 1878, just before which Sakuma left the Taiken Elementary School for his home, Miyazu, where he was to stay until he went up to Kyoto to become a teacher of the early girls' school and then to propose the reformation of that school or the establishment of the new girls' high school.

At the Kyoto deaf and blind school the general education for handicapped boys and girls began to be excluded, and at last only professional education was given to them after the Promulgation of the Imperial Constitution of the Great Japan in 1889. Now under the New Democratic Constitution of Japan after World War II, it is probable to revive the general education for handicapped boys and girls, though some utilitarian trends still check them in their own courses in the Japanese capitalistic society.

Mr Shinsuke Komuro, another teacher of an earhandicapped child at Miyazu, who was influenced by Sakuma, made efforts to teach him at the private school founded by the promoters of the Meiji Democratic Movement in 1875, when he published his essay about the efforts for his earhandicapped pupil in the journal of the Ministry of Education, according to which he is supposed to have noticed that the earhandicapped pupil could pronounce each sound of sentences better in speech than in fragments. To our regret he died of a sudden attack of illness as early as 1885. Messrs. Sakuma and Komuro are sure to have read the Japanese translation of J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* and then they are im-

agined to have read J. J. Rousseau's *Du Contrat social* published in Japanese translation with the translator's notes. But it is difficult to say when and how these translations influenced those teachers.

Mr Masanao Nakamura, the first Japanese translator of *On Liberty*, was one of the promoters of the foundation of the Tokyo Blind School influenced by that of the Kyoto deaf and blind school, the first principal of which was Furukawa. In that early period of the Meiji era those teachers and promoters of Japanese handicapped children's general education claimed the fundamental human rights for them.

They were inspired with the translation of Mill's *On Liberty* (1872) and later with the translation of Rousseau's *Du Contrat social* (translated by 1877 and published in 1882 by Chohmin Nakae, the well-known ideologue of the Meiji Democratic Movement from 1874 to 1884), so that they found the utterances and physical movements of children (both normal-hearing and handicapped ones) voluntary and autonomous in themselves. Such a discovery of theirs is now easy to lead us to accept the verbo-tonal method and theory. There is reason in saying that most of Japanese teachers and parents are likely to learn and practise the verbo-tonal method for their pupils and children.

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Two translators of *On Liberty* and *Du Contrat social*, Messrs. Nakamura and Nakae are noteworthy in that the former's emphasis on the voluntariness of a child and the latter's insistence upon 'la liberté morale' as being the autonomy of human nature may have influenced those teachers who tried to teach the earhandicapped boys and girls in Kyoto and Miyazu in the early period of the Meiji era. Especially Mr Chohmin Nakae had already been inspired by some républicains in France.

They were not only translators but also thinkers, for Mr Nakae was called "Rousseau in the East", who united Taoism with le républicanisme. They are sure to have made efforts to have European thoughts take root deep into the soil of their own country.

In 1874, just after Chohmin Nakae came home from France, he began to teach some youths French thoughts, especially Rousseau at his own private school in Tokyo. In the same year some leaders of the Meiji Democratic Movement proposed that the Japanese Democratic Parliament should be established and that the members of the Parliament should be selected by the Japanese people. In 1881 the party of Liberty had been formed in expectation of the establishment of the Democratic Parliament, but the Government authorities promised to establish the parliament in 1890, when they were to establish not the Democratic Parliament, but the Imperial one. In 1884 some leftist members of the Party of Liberty united with the revolutionary peasants in the district of Chichibu only

60 kilometres from Tokyo, had organized the Party of the Poor People to rebel against the Meiji Regime, with the result that the Commune of Chichibu would be formed and maintained only a week near Tokyo. The policemen and armed forces of the Meiji Regime brought pressure upon the revolutionary bankrupt peasants and gave a deadly blow to the Commune of Chichibu which influenced the peasants and inhabitants in three provinces near Tokyo.

The breakdown of the Commune of Chichibu brought the Meiji Democratic Movement to a complete failure, which opened an easy way to the Promulgation of the Imperial Constitution in 1889 and the establishment of the Imperial Parliament in 1890. Under the Imperial Constitution of the Great Japan along with the government of the Imperial Parliament, Japanese handicapped children had been excluded from the mainstream of the educational administration of the Ministry of Education. Those fundamental human rights of these children as being regarded as important by the teachers engaged in the Meiji Democratic Movement, had been completely looked upon as insignificant. This is the reason that in this essay the author has reported the historical process from the Meiji Restoration to the end of that Democratic Movement as well as the beginnings of education for Japanese handicapped children. The thinkers, teachers and promoters of that Democratic Movement, as previously stated, respected the voluntariness and autonomy of human nature, while the government authorities of the Meiji Regime as reinforced through the establishment of the Imperial Parliament, promoted the dehumanized educational policies, which ended in giving rise to the tendency towards aggressive militarism.

Nowadays, under the New Democratic Constitution as being placed in the mainstream of the Japanese democratic tradition, Japanese people have been trying to establish fundamental human rights so that they may respect the voluntariness and autonomy of human nature.

When Professor Petar Guberina gave an address to the teachers and parents of the handicapped children in Kyoto, they were enlightened and awakened to the complete fulfilment of the fundamental human rights of their handicapped children.

The introduction of the verbo-tonal method into Japan signifies not only the complete development of the faculties and human nature of Japanese earhandicapped children, but the complete fulfilment of the fundamental human rights of all Japanese people including all kinds of handicapped boys and girls, and adults.

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