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New Era coming with “Disater Prevention” and “Nuturing People”

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Japan enters new era of Reiwa from this May after Emperor Akihito, whose era was Heisei, makes way for Crown Prince Naruhito. Of course, the new era does not erase all evils or reset our mal habits/behaviors. CO2 accumulation continues and so does the debt to our children. Having said that, people tend to expect something good to the new era. So I would like to write two of my expectations to the new Reiwa Era.

1. Creation of safe/secure and sustainable society/community

Fortunately, Japan did not go into warfare throughout the Heisei Era (1989-2019), but we experienced various natural disasters such as the Great Hansin Earthquake (1995) , the Great East Japan Earthquake (2011) and others of large magnitude attacked various parts of Japan. In addition to these big earthquakes, climatic disasters have become more conspicuous and serious these days: frequent storms and resulting floods claimed a lot of human lives as well as properties.

Torahiko Terada (1878-1935), a physicist/essayist from Meiji Era up to early Showa, once wrote that natural disasters should be the most difficult enemy for any nation because we cannot prevent their attacks even with science and technologies while warfares could be avoided by our efforts. He suggested that Japan with frequent natural disasters should deploy a national defence forces with scientific expertise on natural disasters, believing that, for maintaining national security, politics needs to go with science.

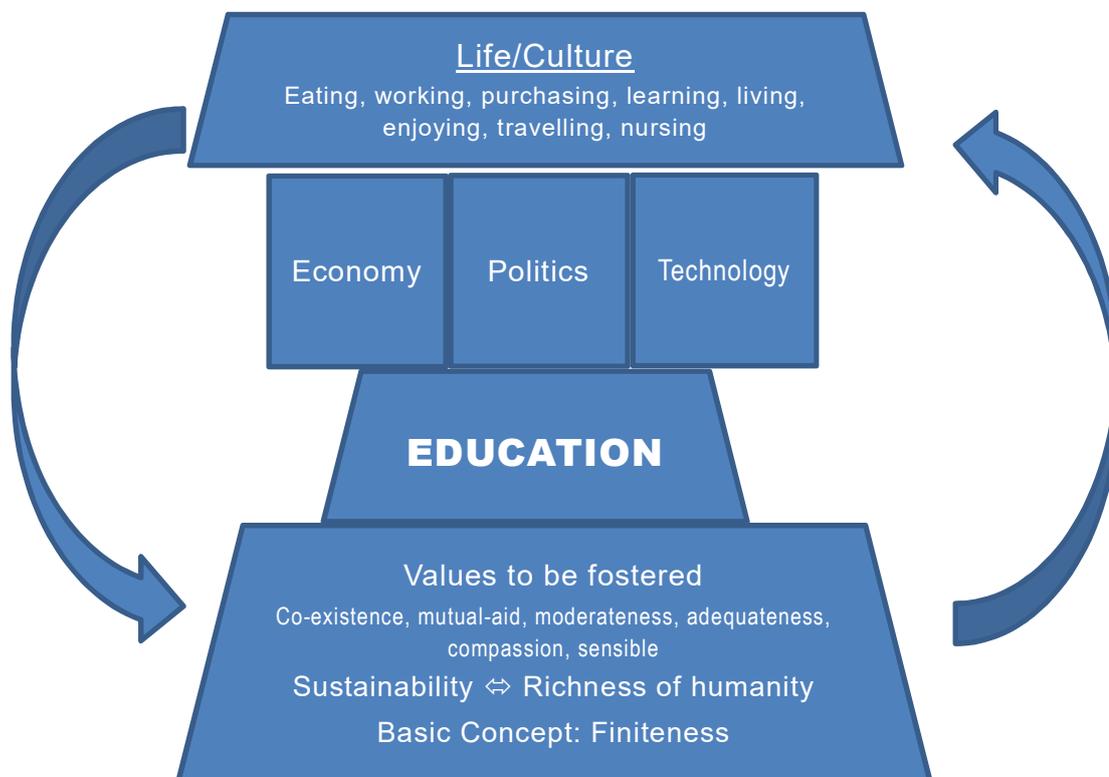
He wrote this in 1934, well before we got aware of climate changes. Nowadays, climatic abnormal weather is becoming more frequent and violent, so we must be more highly prepared for natural disasters. No need of big spending (more than ¥5 trillion/year) on armament of JSDF (Japan Self-Defence Forces) preparing for hypothetical wars with no scientific evidence. (It is in fact for the profit of the war industry.) What we most need now for the sake of safe/sacure society is the enhanced national disaster prevention system based on scientific

knowledge/information and we have to face up to the reality that warned by experts.

2. Raising children through education in the true sense of the word

We are trying to depict the structure of what we call “Green Civilization Society” using the following chart.

As the chart shows, we consider Education as the basis of society (politics, economy and technology, etc.) because it is people that control economy, politics and technologies and the quality of a society depends on how people of that society were educated (at school, at home and in the community).



We have been emphasizing the importance of education in various occasions, but still education in this country, especially school education, has been degraded more and more. For example, such new curriculums as English and Computer Programming were added in elementary school education under the government guidelines starting from 2020, when neither parents/kids nor teachers have enough time to digest them. Moreover, the guidelines request teachers to grade up their teaching and provide active learning through subjective and communicative methods.

For the active learning where students are expected to do research themselves and discuss based on their findings, a lot of time should be allocated to each of the subject. This is not possible under the limited schedule of today's public education, but the government requests are increasing without considering the actual situation on the ground. We cannot but ask ourselves what is the education for and to whom the education is targeted. At the same time, I have a specific clinical concern on the IT and ITC-oriented education in elementary and mid-level education. In fact, medical people have warned that excessive exposure to IT and ICT gadgets will prevent a balance of intellectual, mental and physical growth of young children.

Rather, today's education should focus on nurturing capabilities of thinking/judging/implementing by ourselves, of keep asking ourselves very basic questions of life, of communicating with others as a person of dignity, and of fostering qualities as a citizen. Both English and IT would be useful for senior students if they have learned to utilize them effectively by themselves. However, the Japanese government, under the pressure from the industry, decided to introduce these tools as early as when children's brain has not been fully developed, even before they acquire a good command of their mother tongue Japanese. This would be a strong evidence that our government puts more emphasis on economy and industrial development than fostering its people/citizens.

Recently, the Government Council Proposal for the formulation of the Long-Term Strategy under the Paris Agreement was announced. Unfortunately, the proposal is full of those words as "business-led", "innovation" or such technical terms as "CCS", "next-generation accumulator", and "next-generation nuclear power". It does not at all refer to "people" that actually control what these words represent. While degradation of education going on and on, and so does deterioration of people, the Japanese government and the ministry of environment have forgotten the importance of nurturing sensible people, the very basis of a country.

We have seen a lot of progresses during the Heisei Era. People enjoyed the progresses and eventually desired more and more, and as the result, our enlarged desires brought about deteriorated environment and unstable society. Nowadays, what we need to do is to accept this reality, and to build a society based on a new people-based values. Not economy, not technology, but "people" should be focused on. Then, we can create a new era which is only possible on the basis of nurturing good people.