

'Tertiary Japanese Language Education in New Zealand - Are We Giving Generation Z What They Want?' Weekend workshop for tertiary educators of Japanese in NZ

I am happy to report on the weekend workshop which took place at Wharerata, Massey University, Palmerston North on September 13-14, 2014.

The workshop on the above theme was hosted by the School of Humanities, Massey University, in cooperation with JSANZ (Japanese Studies Aotearoa New Zealand). Funding was also received from the Japan Foundation. 23 attended, including representatives from all programmes teaching Japanese in New Zealand as well as from the New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers, Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education, International Languages Exchanges and Pathways (the Japanese national language advisor) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. An opening address was given by former Ambassador to Japan Ian Kennedy emphasising the continuing relevance and importance of Japanese studies to New Zealand and the untapped opportunities which exist. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Chihiro Kinoshita Thomson (Professor of Japanese Studies, the University of New South Wales), on the topic 'Japanese Communities of Practice: Connecting Japanese language university students and the world beyond'. Professor Thomson also facilitated a workshop on 'Learner inclusive classroom activities: Towards promotion of learner autonomy and expression of learner agency'. Both the keynote and the workshop demonstrated the rich learning experience which can arise through transferring key course roles and responsibilities from instructor to student.

Seven other papers tying into the workshop theme were also presented, and the programme featured two round-table discussion sessions on 'Creating career-capable Japanese graduates: Matching motivation, the tertiary experience and market needs' and 'Re-building capacity in Japanese'.

Feedback from participants about the workshop has been very positive, with encouraging comments such as 'a huge success and very inspiring', the 'warm, open and collegial atmosphere of the discussion', 'impressed with the organisation of the event and the quality of the participants', 'positive chemistry and good will of everyone', 'productive, enjoyable and stimulating', 'really enthused by the positive vibes'.

As the above comments suggest, the workshop proved to be a valuable and worthwhile event: not only did exposure to innovative pedagogies stimulate participants to re-think classroom strategies which would engage in the most effective possible way with Generation Z, but the workshop provided ample opportunity for formal and informal discussions of a more political nature around Japanese language advocacy and the promotion of languages in general in New Zealand. In addition the value of the event in creating a 'community of practice' focussed on Japanese language advocacy among colleagues from Japanese programmes across New Zealand and representatives from support organisations cannot be underestimated. The 'takeaway' from the workshop was a clear desire to set Japanese studies on the best possible footing, and concrete ideas, pedagogical and otherwise, about how to do so.

In this the generous contribution of the Sasakawa Fellowship Fund for Japanese Language Education is gratefully acknowledged. One key reason for the success of the workshop was that costs to participants were kept to a minimum, and Sasakawa played an important role in this regard.

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