



# IP Friends Connections

This Magazine is published as part of the Intellectual Property Cooperation in Human Resource Development Program of the Japan Patent Office. The aim of this Magazine is to follow up on training programs through the dissemination of information to IP Friends, those who have completed training courses of the above program. We very much hope that the information in this publication related to intellectual property, and the comments from either IP Friends or lectures, will prove beneficial to you in your work.

JAPAN PATENT OFFICE

【The meaning of 縁 (Enishi)】

"Enishi" refers to the bond created between people when encountering someone they were destined to meet. We have chosen this term as the title for our publication because we are all members of the Intellectual Property community, and the bonds created between us extend beyond national borders. We hope that you will use this informative publication to deepen the "Enishi" you have created with your IP Friends.

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### Report of FY 2016 JPO / IPR Training Course on Operational Patent Examination Training Program from APIC

### 2016 Operational Patent Examination Training Program Friday, September 2 to Tuesday, November 1, 2016

The 8<sup>th</sup> Operational Patent Examination Training (OPET) program was held this year, this time lasting approximately two months. Two patent examiners participated from Brazil, two from Egypt, and six from India. Mr. Andre Felipe Costa Vliese and Mr. Rockfeller Maciel Pecanha represented the National Institute of Industrial Property of Brazil. Mr. Ayman Dergham Khalifa Hassan and Mr. Sherif Abdelmeged Abdelkerem Saleh of the Egyptian Patent Office also attended. The Office of the Controller-General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks of India has four offices: one each for the eastern, western, southern, and northern parts of the country. Three of these regional offices sent examiners as OPET trainees: Mr. Debasish Banerjee from the Delhi Office, Mr. Arun Kumar Pradhan and Mr. Ram Sundar Patel from the Kolkata Office, and Mr. Piyush Pralhad Lende, Mr. Sagar Baburao Pol, and Mr. Shrikant Sagar Bagde from the Mumbai Office.

### First part (September 2 to October 6)

On September 2, the trainees participated in an orientation session in which the trainees and APIC/HIDA staff introduced themselves. The trainees appeared nervous initially, but soon became accustomed to the classes and the Japanese lifestyle. They gradually got to know each other and started having discussions and friendly conversations during breaks and after class. They sometimes went out together on holidays to engage in sightseeing and shopping.

On September 5, they visited the JPO, toured the trial court and the National Center for Industrial Property Information and Training (INPIT) and paid a courtesy visit to JPO Deputy Commissioner Masayuki Koyanagi.



On September 6, the trainees presented their country reports. They explained the current patent examination systems of their home countries and related issues. Many people attended the presentations and asked a number of questions about the IP environments and specific patent-related cases in the presenters' countries. The trainees also engaged in active Q&A-style discussions. In the course of the discussions, they were able to identify issues their countries' IP systems in a new light and deepened their understanding.



This training program was divided into two parts. Before the first part, the trainees presented a pre-training report in which they explained their jobs and the issues they face as examiners in their home countries and discussed the goals that they were hoping to achieve through this training program.

The trainees next studied the theoretical underpinnings of the Japanese Patent Examination Guidelines in detail through lectures on various topics, such as industrially applicable inventions, novelty, inventive step, degree of identicalness, and amendment. Some trainees commented that they would like to understand the similarities and differences between the Japanese Guidelines and their countries' Guidelines and improve the patent examination quality of their IP Offices by emulating Japan's strengths.

The trainees were then divided by specialty (Automobiles/Two-Wheeled Vehicles (vehicle bodies) and Information/Telecommunications) and given specialized lectures on technology-specific examination guidelines. The trainees enjoyed these lectures and later commented that, while the general lectures allowed a frank exchange of opinions by everyone on a wide



variety of topics, the specialized lectures allowed them to gain greater knowledge in their specific fields. They seemed to appreciate both experiences.

The trainees were also given a lecture about IP management by Japanese companies and had an opportunity to visit Hitachi, Ltd., where they received a comprehensive explanation about Hitachi's IP management and R&D systems and policies. The trainees also visited Shinohara Press Service Co., Ltd. to learn about IP management at a mid-size company. Shinohara Press Service explained its IP management methods and the importance of managing and utilizing all of its IP assets for the benefit of its business. Some trainees commented that both company visits were beneficial because they helped the trainees understand actual company experiences and the resulting knowledge acquired by the companies.



On September 28, the trainees visited the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), one of Japan's most important research institutes, to learn about its IP-related activities. They also visited the Science Square and the Geological Museum. The close collaboration between research institutes like AIST and the national government was new to the trainees and they listened carefully to the explanations given at these facilities. The trainees were impressed that AIST has been developing and commercializing various technologies since its foundation and were excited to learn that AIST is still developing technologies society urgently needs.

At the end of the first part of the training program, the trainees were given lectures and training sessions on the legal process by which an examiner's patent application rejection decision can be challenged in court, invalidation trials, and example patent infringement cases. The trainees had been mainly studying patent examination methods and criteria. Some trainees commented that learning about the post-grant procedures raised their awareness of the treatment of patented inventions in JPO trials and judicial trials, and that the experience would influence their examinations of patent applications in their home countries.

The first part of the program concluded with presentations by the trainees on specific cases they had handled as examiners in their home countries and a discussion. Some trainees commented that the presentation afforded an opportunity to review their experiences in light of their newly acquired knowledge about Japanese examinations and to have a candid discussion about how to improve their examination practices. They seemed to consider the discussion very helpful in enhancing their understanding.

### Second part (October 7 to November 1)

The second part started in October with lectures and training sessions about search methods such as J-Platpat, Patent Map, IPC Classification, and F1/F Term, laying the groundwork for further training on prior art searches and the examination process. After learning about publicly available databases, the trainees visited Thomson Reuters Professional and learned about the usefulness of privately-offered search tools. They asked various questions in order to improve their performance as examiners.

More training sessions were offered to the trainees on novelty, inventive step, etc. to enhance practical examination skills in addition to the basic knowledge acquired in the first part of the training program. In these classes, the lecturers first gave introductory explanations and then provided the trainees with information on example cases for them to study. Each trainee was expected to come up with his/her own answers based on the information provided during the lectures and then discuss them with the lecturer and the other trainees. After the discussion, the lecturer would comment and explain the example case. The classes were thus very intensive and practical.

During these training sessions, the trainees were divided by specialty in the same way that they were during the lectures on technology-specific examination guidelines offered in the first part of the training (Automobiles/Two-Wheeled Vehicles (vehicle bodies) and Information/Telecommunications). Consequently, the trainees were expected to know not only about the patent examination guidelines and patent law, but also about technical engineering, in order to correctly understand the example cases. The demanding nature of these sessions caused some trainees to comment that they were difficult but very effective. After the training sessions, the trainees received on-the-job training on patent searches and examinations from actual JPO examiners. Some trainees commented that this was a precious opportunity to actually see and experience the work of the JPO examiners.



The trainees gave presentations about their achievements in the training program on its last day (November 1). They explained what they learned and how they were going to use the newly acquired knowledge in the IP Offices of their home countries. They also explained, in detail, which aspects of the Japanese patent examination system most interested them during this training program. They analyzed the commonalities and differences between the Japanese system and their home countries' systems, features of the Japanese system capable of introduction in their home countries given local IP circumstances and what the trainees and their IP Offices can do to make these changes. The trainees then exchanged opinions with the lecturers who attended the presentations. This process offered a final learning opportunity for the trainees.



After the presentation session, a discussion was held to review the training program. The JPO and APIC exchanged opinions with the trainees on improvements that could be made to this type of small group training program. The training program received generally favorable comments with regard to the dense, valuable, two-part curriculum, which allowed the trainees to gradually progress to higher levels of understanding. Some trainees said that the technology-specific training sessions were particularly satisfying and useful. Proposed improvements included giving the trainees a wider range of options for company visits, offering a wider range of lectures by examiners currently working at the JPO, and providing more participatory classes.

After the review session, a closing ceremony was held. Mr. Kazuyuki Miura, Director of the JPO's International Cooperation Division, presented a completion certificate to each trainee. One of the trainees, Mr. Debasish Banerjee, gave a speech in appreciation and to mark the end of the training program.

This was the longest training program in which trainees have ever been invited to participate. The relatively small number of trainees made intensive education possible. Most of the lecturers were current or former JPO examiners who were able to teach highly specialized practical knowledge. The trainees asked the lecturers a variety of stimulating questions, which turned most of their classes into discussion sessions. The lecturers expressed satisfaction that the trainees were not merely receiving information about the Japanese system, but participating actively in discussions with lecturers, which was beneficial to everyone concerned.

During their free time after classes and on weekends, the trainees visited various places and enjoyed their lives in Japan. This training program's length made it possible for its participants to meet trainees taking other training courses. Having successfully completed the program, the trainees left Japan greatly satisfied. We hope that they find their experiences in Japan useful in their future careers.



# FY2016 Training Courses Completed (Yearbook)



IP Trainers



Trademark Examinations under the Madrid System for Thailand



Patent Examinations (Basic Program)



Trademark Examinations under the Madrid System for Indonesia



Patent Examanation Practices for Indonesia



Practitioners Specializing in Patents



Establishing an IP Office in Myanmar



Operational Patent Examination Training Program



Establishing Patent Examination Guidelines



Patent Examination Management



Substantive Examination of Trademark for Vietnam



Substantive Examination of Design



Sebstantive Examination of Trademark



Patent Examination in Specific Technical Fields for Latin American Countries



Managing IP



Practitioners Specializing in Trademarks



Trademark Examination Practices (Basic Program)



Anti-Counterfeiting Measures for Practitioners



Patent Examination Practices for South Africa



IP Protection Lawyers





Trademark Examinations under the Madrid System for Cambodia



Patent Examination Practices for Thailand

# Report of FY2016 Follow-up Seminar from APIC (Myanmar)

### Follow-up Seminar in Myanmar

On January 18, 2017, the Japan Institute for Promoting Invention and Innovation (JIPII) held a seminar in Naypyidaw, Myanmar as a part of the JPO-commissioned "Cooperation in Human Resource Development" project. This was the second seminar in Myanmar. The first was held in October 2014.

The JPO held the seminar with assistance from the Ministry of Education of Myanmar (MOE). The seminar was hosted by the Japan Institute for Promoting Invention and Innovation (APIC-JIPII). Mr. Win Khang Moe, Director General of Research and Innovation for the MOE, kicked off the seminar with a speech, which was followed by a speech by Mr. Yoshihiro Nakayama, Deputy Director of the International Cooperation Division of the JPO. In total, 72 people participated in the seminar. While most were from the MOE, some universities and research institutions were also represented.

This theme of this seminar was, "Utilizing the IPR System to Promote Innovation." It consisted of two sessions. The first was entitled, "Management to Create Inventions," and the second, "IP Office Involvement in IP Policy." A special speech entitled, "Current Industrial Property Rights Policy Conditions in Japan," was given before the first session by Mr. Yoshihiro Nakayama, followed by the keynote speech by Dr. Moe Moe Thwe, Director and Head of the IPDEPT of the Ministry of Education, entitled, "Current Status of Intellectual Property Policy in Myanmar." Dr. Thwe completed a six-month research project in Japan in 2013 as a long-term researcher invited under the FY2013 Cooperation in Human Resource Development project.

Also, Dr. Sint Soe, Director of the Mandalay Technological University, gave a lecture entitled, "Management Strategy for Creating Inventions in Myanmar." Dr. Hnin Nwe Aye, Deputy Director of the IPDEPT of the Ministry of Education, gave a lecture entitled, "Role and Future Vision of the IP Office to Promote Innovation in Myanmar." From Japan, Mr. Jinzo Fujino, an Adjunct Professor at the Tokyo University of Science (TUS), gave a lecture entitled, "Inventions, Innovation and the IP System." Mr. Yoshitoshi Tanaka, a Professor in the Department of Industrial Engineering and Economics of the School of Engineering of the Tokyo Institute of Technology, gave a lecture entitled, "The Japanese Innovation Experience and Core Values." Mr. Takao Ogiya, Director General of the Asia-Pacific Industrial Property Center of the Japan Institute for Promoting Invention and Innovation, gave a lecture entitled, "Japan's National IP Strategy." Time was allotted for Q&A and the exchange of opinions after each session. Active discussions even extended beyond the initially scheduled times.

IP law is still developing in Myanmar. Preparations have been made for the establishment of the Myanmar IP Office. The participants in this seminar exhibited a keen interest in intellectual property and great enthusiasm to implement new policies in Myanmar.



Mr. Win Khang Moe, Director General, Research and Innovation, Ministry of Education, Myanmar and Mr. Yoshihiro Nakayama, Deputy Director, International Cooperation Division, JPO



Dr. Moe Moe Thwe, Director and Head, IPDEPT, Ministry of Education



Seminar participants

# FY2016 Follow-up Seminar Completed (Yearbook)



[Follow up Seminar in the Philippines]



[Follow up Seminar in Thailand]





[Follow up seminar in India]



[Follow up seminar in Myanmar]

## Questionnaire Results IPR training course in Japan and appreciation for your cooperation

As you know, we requested that everyone who completed our training courses from April 2014 to September 2016 fill out our questionnaire in order for us to evaluate the effectiveness of the training courses.

In order to continue advancing JPO's "Cooperation in Human Resource Development," we would also like to ask for your active participation as IP Friends in various projects for our course alumni.

Thank you again for your cooperation with our survey. The tallied results for each question are as follows:

### **Details of the Survey**

- 1) Survey period: October 3, 2016- November 28, 2016
- 2) Area of survey:
  - 1.Trainees that completed WIPO short term training courses and WIPO long term research programs from FY 2013 FY 2015
  - 2. Trainees that completed JICA training courses from FY 2013 FY 2015
  - 3.Trainees that completed JPO short term training courses and JPO long term research programs from FY 2013 FY 2016

excluding those whose contact information (email) is unknown.

Government employees: 805 trainees, private sector employees: 333 trainees (total: 1138 trainees)

Response Method: 1.e-mail 2.fax

### Number of replies

	Number of valid responses	Number of questionnaires sent	Response rate
Government sector	124	805	15%
Private sector	90	333	27%
Total	214	1138	19%



		Number of valid responses	Number of questionnaires sent	Response rate①	Response rate②
	Intellectual Property Office	108	699	15%	50%
	Court	6	44	14%	3%
Government	Prosecutor's Office	0	7	0%	0%
Sector	Police Office	0	3	0%	0%
	Customs Office	3	15	20%	1%
	Other	7	37	19%	3%
	Research Institute	2	5	40%	1%
Private sector	University or Educational Institution	16	73	22%	7%
	Government-related Organization	0	0	0%	0%
	Employee of a private company	16	79	20%	7%
	Employee of a legal or consulting firm	56	176	32%	26%
	Total	214	1138		100%

### Breakdown of respondents (classification by field)

\*Response rate① indicates the ratio of valid responses to questionnaires sent within each field.
\*Response rate② indicates the ratio of valid responses of each field to the total number of valid responses.

### Have you utilized the training information in your job? (Question 1-1)

	Valid responses by government employees		Valid resp employees in th	oonses by e private sector	Тс	ıtal
Yes	120	98%	89	100%	209	99%
No	2	2%	0	0%	2	1%
Total	122	100%	89	100%	211	100%

# Were there any outcomes/effects produced as a result of utilizing the training information in your job? (Question 1-2)

	Valid responses by		Valid resp	oonses by	Total	
	government	employees	employees in th	e private sector	i otai	
Yes	118	98%	88	100%	206	99%
No	2	2%	0	0%	2	1%
Total	120	100%	88	100%	208	100%

### Specific outcomes/effects (Question following 1-2)

(Multiple answers allowed)

Valid responses by government employees			Valid responses by employees	in the priva	ate sector
Improvement of laws, regulations, guidelines, etc.	60	17%	Increased opportunities to utilize J-PlatPat (IPDL)	29	7%
Establishment of intellectual property policies/measures	44	13%	Increased number of commercialized and branded products	14	3%
Increased number of transactions processed	32	9%	Increased number of acquired IP rights	31	7%
Reduction of time required for transaction processing	37	11%	Reduction of time required for processing transactions	18	4%
Clarification of judgment criteria	51	15%	Increased number of technology transfer and licensing contracts	13	3%
Increased opportunities to utilize AIPN and J-PlatPat (IPDL)	35	10%	Improvement of drafting documents (specification etc.)	47	11%
Improvement of knowledge re. PCT/Madrid Protocol applications	43	12%	Improvement of knowledge re. PCT/Madrid Protocol applications	43	10%
Increase in number of counterfeit/pirated goods seized	11	3%	Increased number of transactions and exchanges with Japan-affiliated companies (within your country or abroad)	17	4%
High evaluation from users	20	6%	Improvement of ability to provide appropriate advice	77	18%
Other	15	4%	Increased opportunities to serve as a lecturer	37	9%
Total	348	100%	Increased number of people around me who understand intellectual property	67	16%
			High evaluation from third parties	30	7%
			Other	9	2%
			Total	432	100%



# What would you like to learn next in order to maintain and improve the knowledge that you gained from the training course? (Question 3)

(Multiple answers allowed)

Valid responses by government employees			Valid responses by employees	in the priva	ate sector
More detailed knowledge on Japan's patent laws, trademark laws and design law	69	13%	More detailed knowledge on Japan's patent laws, trademark laws and design law	39	6%
More detailed knowledge on patent laws, trademark laws and design law in countries other than Japan	58	11%	More detailed knowledge on patent laws, trademark laws and design law in countries other than Japan	42	6%
The Japanese government's initiatives to boost public awareness about intellectual property	59	11%	The Japanese government's initiatives to boost public awareness about intellectual property	44	7%
Collaborations between industry, academia and government	63	12%	Collaborations between industry, academia and government	55	8%
Technology licensing organizations (TLOs)	36	7%	Technology licensing organizations (TLOs)	47	7%
OJT on examinations	36	7%	Intellectual property management	70	11%
Case studies (examinations)	77	14%	Techniques for evaluating value of intellectual property	65	10%
Case studies (infringemental cases)	56	10%	Commercializing and utilizing intellectual property and patent license operations	56	9%
Examinations such as PCT and the Madrid Protocol	41	8%	OJT on specifications	14	2%
Intellectual property systems other than industrial property rights, such as copyright law and the Plant Seed Act	37	7%	Case studies (specifications)	42	6%
Other	10	2%	Case studies (infringemental cases)	52	8%
Total	542	100%	Overseas applications and Examinations such as PCT and the Madrid Protocol	49	7%
			Points to note regarding intellectual property when expanding overseas	37	6%
			Intellectual property systems other than industrial property rights, such as copyright law and the Plant Seed Act	39	6%
			Other	7	1%
			Total	658	100%

# JPO hosts IP seminars in several countries every year. If a follow-up seminar were to be held in your country, what topics would you like to see covered? (Question 4)

(Multiple answers allowed)

	Valid responses by government employees		Valid responses by employees in the private sector		Total	
Intellectual property management by companies	52	11%	60	16%	112	13%
Intellectual property management by research institutions and educational organizations (universities)	69	15%	50	13%	119	14%
Affiliations between industry, academia and government	66	14%	41	11%	107	13%
Connections between intellectual assets and economic development	61	13%	56	15%	117	14%
IP enforcement	71	15%	62	16%	133	16%
Brand strategies	50	11%	54	14%	104	12%
Public awareness about intellectual property	85	18%	55	14%	140	17%
Other	6	1%	7	2%	13	2%
Total	460	100%	385	100%	845	100%



# Column: "Graduation"



Mr. Takao OGIYA, Director General of APIC

Mr. Takao OGIYA

Around the time that this column is posted, it will be graduation season in Japan. Many universities rent out large halls for ceremonies and female students dress in their best outfits to attend. Some say that young women today dress up in their finest attire at their coming of age, graduation, and wedding ceremonies. It appears they see their graduation ceremony as an important life event.

The present day school system started in Japan in 1872, but graduation in those days meant the presentation of certificates for progression to the next school year, to children that had achieved passing grades in a year-end test. Technically speaking, it was a certificate indicating an advancement from one school level to the next. Thus, there was a "graduation" every year, for each new level.

At some point this practice came to be carried out as a "graduation ceremony," reserved for those major life events when one moved away from the campus of an elementary school, middle school, high school, or university. This ceremony is also referred to as a "graduation certificate awarding ceremony."

I never actually attended my own college graduation. On the day of the ceremony, I was in the research room, talking with my friends. In those days, students didn't think attending graduation was all that important. And in fact, my professor did hand me my diploma a few days later. There was nothing ceremonial about it—he just said "here," and passed it over like it was some ordinary document or handout.

When I started to write this column, I asked my wife what she wore to her college graduation, and she replied that she wore a special kimono. In any case, it seems that female students' dressing up in their best outfits is not a recent trend—it is a tradition that has continued since long ago.

When I told her I hadn't attended my own graduation, she was incredulous.

My elementary school graduation is the one that left the deepest impression on me. As the graduating class, we sixth graders prepared a somewhat special message card file when January came around, and exchanged cards with our favorite teachers and close friends, writing messages for each other. Lots of people wrote messages for me and I wrote words of farewell on my friends' cards too. When I asked the janitor that oversaw cleaning and groundskeeping in the school for a message, he immediately drew me a beautiful picture and wrote some words of encouragement. The surprised and moved feeling I had at that moment stays with me today, even fifty years later.

Graduation is a farewell. After six years of elementary school, or three years of middle school or high school, an essentially compulsory farewell comes about. No matter how close people may be, when the paths they move onto differ, they must part at that point. No matter how much secret love you may hold in your heart for someone, you will no longer see that person's face every day. And, as graduation draws closer, with fewer and fewer days left, you become overcome with the desire to share your feelings and not just leave without saying anything.

Some manage to summon the nerve and confess their love. Come what may, they are pleased they were able to express their feelings. They take pride in their courage, which will help them move forward on their new path.

However, others graduate without having been able to make such a confession. They shy away from the fear of unrequited love, or of being hurt, and the object of their affection ends up never having noticed their fleeting puppy love.

Graduation is also a departure. Even if you didn't have such a good time in middle school or high school, graduating gives you a clean slate. Even if you feel you didn't reach your potential in study or sports, those tough recollections and sad memories receive a kind of closure, and one can clear them away. By holding onto only the fun memories and beautiful recollections, you can move on to the next step, and tackle new challenges with a fresh mindset.

When one enters the workforce, there are practically no opportunities for "graduation." Changes in work situation are something people deal with on their own.

### "Graduation"…

To these young people who are welcoming a new chapter of their lives, I want to ask: Did you find your courage? Have you wiped the slate clean? And I want to give them a rousing cheer. You'll be fine. Just face the future and take your next step forward.

Lately I have begun to feel that maybe I too should have attended my own college graduation ceremony.





# Selection from TOP 100 Japanese Innovations ~ "Kumon" ~

### The Kumon Educational Method

### Outline

Since the end of the Second World War a number of revolutionary education systems that have gone on to be widely accepted around the world have been invented in Japan. In the case of education systems for music and musical instruments, people have heard about the Yamaha Music School and the Suzuki Method, but when it comes to an educational method famous worldwide for mathematics and language skills it is none other than the "Kumon Educational Method" (hereinafter "Kumon Method"). This will be discussed here.

The Kumon Method is a learning method advocated by the Kumon Group (hereinafter "Kumon") and has the Kumon Institute of Education at its core. After the first Center was established by founder Toru Kumon in 1955, its scale expanded swiftly by way of offering unique learning materials and school administration knowhow through a franchise system.

The three main characteristics of the Kumon Method are: 1. self-learning, 2. focused learning content, and 3. individualized education tailored to the abilities and progress of the student. This idea was slowly developed by the founder Toru Kumon during his youth and during his time as a teacher. The Method became set while he was seeking out ways to best educate his eldest son at home. The Kumon Method, which aims at the cultivation of general skills as the basis of all learning—without being concerned with school year level—is highly regarded across borders and around the world. As of March 2013, the Kumon Method had a total of over 4,000,000 students in 48 countries and regions around the world.<sup>1</sup> Figure 1 shows

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Figure 1. A Sample of Learning Materials of the Kumon Method (Mathmatics)

a sample of learning materials actually used in the Kumon centers.

In this piece, after briefly discussing the main characteristics of the Kumon Method of learning, there will be an explanation of how the Kumon system came to exist.

### The Path to Innovation

### (1) The Main Characteristics of the Kumon Method of Learning

The unique character of the Kumon Method can be broadly summarized in the three aspects of: 1. self-learning, 2. focused learning content, and 3. individualized education tailored to the abilities and progress of the student.

### (i) Self-learning

The Kumon Method considers that, depending on the study content, there are cases where group learning at school is most effective and there are cases where self-learning is most effective. Toru Kumon, the founder of the method, believed that when it came to skills in reading, writing, and math, which form the basis of all learning, because there is a big difference in the amount of effort different people need to expend in order to acquire these skills, it is effective for students to study at a pace tailored to the individual through supplementary education.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, the Kumon Method centers were developed as places for self-learning that specialize in shaping foundational skills.

Self-learning is one of the key features of the Kumon Method, but of course there are also instructors. However, the instructors do not teach all of the worksheet content, but rather provide careful "just-right" guidance when the student simply cannot do the exercise on his or her own.<sup>3</sup> Instructors constantly monitor learners' understanding and decide on advancement strategies for worksheets.<sup>4</sup> For example, even if two learners get 100%, if it has clearly taken more time to complete than what the Kumon Method deems to be the standard time, the learner may be required to repeat that portion depending on the instructor's judgement.<sup>5</sup> The experience and knowledge of instructors in tailoring the "just-right" level for students—something that is shared throughout the organization—is also well regarded by scholars of business studies.<sup>6</sup>

#### (ii) Focused Learning Content

The Kumon Method, by stripping out applied problems, actually aims at the cultivation of solid foundational abilities. For example, in the case of math, worksheets are designed to focus on the study of algebra, and word problems are not prominently featured.<sup>7</sup> Molding skills that will become the foundation for later learning, such as those in calculation and vocabulary, will have a positive influence not only on learners' other study endeavors but also on their nature as a person. This is the fundamental mindset of the Kumon Method.<sup>8,9</sup>

#### (iii) Individualized Education Tailored to the Abilities and Progress of the Student.

The Kumon Method works hard to give worksheet sets suited to the abilities and progress level of the student. The Kumon Method worksheets are comprised of several thousands of pages of worksheets for each subject, and are arranged in a predetermined order so that an easy to handle progression in learning can gradually be made from simple pre-school level content to university education level.<sup>10</sup> Students are expected to extend themselves and their abilities to the maximum possible degree without concern for schooling year;<sup>11, 12</sup> and one of the goals is to have students complete the course up to calculus while still in elementary

school.<sup>13</sup> The most appropriate level of worksheet is determined and distributed for each student,<sup>14</sup> and by arranging it such that student progresses to higher learning while building experience in answering 100% correctly, they do not lose enthusiasm and are able to have fun while studying.<sup>15</sup>

The Kumon Method worksheets are constantly being improved based on opinions coming from the actual centers. The 800-plus pages of worksheets for math created by the founder Toru Kumon have been reconstituted as 5,520 worksheet pages (as of July 2011), and are constantly being changed and improved to make the content and structure easier for children to work with.<sup>16</sup>

Above, the essence of the Kumon Method was summarized in very simple terms. At present, the actual learning happening in Kumon Method centers progresses as shown in Figure 2, and essentially every center in the world follows this process.<sup>17</sup>

### (2) The Origins of the Kumon Method

The roots of the Method were born one day when the founder of Kumon, Toru Kumon, become a fourth year student at Shimoji Elementary School (today's Showa Elementary School). In Toru's classes the teacher shaped the content so the foundation of learning was self-study related to mathematic calculation, and the teacher only took questions when students reached an impasse. The students' learning level was posted on a chart at the back of the classroom where they could fill in the number of textbook pages they had completed. The students, including Toru, would compete with one another in their studies and were able to enjoy a sense of achievement. Although this style of class was later halted, this experience Toru had in his youth allowed him to understand the value of learning through self-study.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 2. Study Flow of Kumon Method

Tosa Junior High School, to which Toru graduated after elementary school, defined itself by an educational strategy that placed importance on students' self-study, and Toru was able to once again immerse himself in learning this way. At Tosa Junior High School, because students' learning was constantly being driven forward depending on the individual learning level, it was not at all rare for students to move beyond their schooling year in terms of the learning materials they were working from. Through his experience with self-study at Tosa Junior High School, Toru came to feel that, no matter the subject, it was more interesting and efficient to study on his own than to receive ineffective teaching from an instructor.<sup>19</sup>

Toru's experiences in elementary and junior high school were enough to have him personally experience the effectiveness of a learning method centered on self-study. Before long, Toru, who had graduated university and become a junior high and senior high school teacher, decided that he now wanted to pass his own personal learning method on to the students he was teaching.<sup>20</sup> When it came to simple content, he would push the students forward depending on their learning level without explaining things in detail, and when there arose sections needing explanation, Toru would guide the students carefully and thoroughly. These centers of Toru's were popular with the students and Toru grew in confidence about his theories on education.<sup>21</sup>

Toru's educational method—which moves students' learning forward based on their understanding without getting caught up in the idea of schooling year—has occasionally been criticized as being "cram" education. However, because Toru felt that students' blossoming learning potential must never be crushed, he continued his unique education method, and also invited some of his students to his home to study. As many as 100 young people would assemble at his house for the English class he held there, and this also let him practice his education method even more freely.<sup>23</sup>

### (3) The Birth of the Kumon Method Centers

The centers were born in the beginning of summer 1954. Toru's wife came to talk to him about the poor grades their eldest son was getting in mathematics in his second year of elementary school. Through his experience as a math teacher, Toru was painfully aware of the large number of students that were struggling in math due to a lack of foundational calculation skills. So, Toru narrowed his focus to cultivating these calculation skills and, cutting out as many other elements as possible, created self-study worksheets for his son.<sup>24</sup>

When starting his son's home-based education, Toru decided on four rules: 1. there will be 30 minutes of study time every day, 2. the goal is not raising elementary school grades but rather focusing on university entrance exams, 3. there is no giving up partway through, and study is always continued, and 4. each day's problems are to be studied before dinner, and the answers are to be checked at night.<sup>25</sup> Every day Toru would make his own calculation problems on loose leaf paper and give one page to his son. The home-based learning in the Kumon household placed importance on equipping their son with a predisposition to proactive learning and had the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of self-learning.<sup>26</sup>

The fruits of Toru's education method were soon very apparent, and his son's grades quickly went up. Before long this earned him praise from his neighborhood, and people started to ask him to also oversee their child's self-learning. While he was a teacher he would also often invite students from his school to his home to instruct them, and during this time Toru opened up his home for the neighborhood children. This was in 1955 and would later come to be called the "First Math Center."<sup>27</sup>

### (4) The Nationwide Spread of the Kumon Method Centers 28

The first Kumon Method Math Center, which grew out of the home-based education at the Kumon household, attracted around ten people in six months, and the positive results came as expected.<sup>29</sup> Toru, having deepened his confidence in the Kumon Method through this, established three centers in the Higashiyodogawa district of Osaka city by June of 1958, while enlisting the help of his former students. These centers also produced good steady results, and Toru shifted from confidence to certainty.<sup>30</sup>

In July of 1958, Toru made the decision to spread the Kumon Method nationwide, and established a managing office.<sup>31</sup> After that the speed of the spread of the Kumon Method was staggering. In 1958 Kumon Method centers grew to 13 locations with around 300 students<sup>32</sup> by 1961 this had grown to over 80 locations and 2,000 students,<sup>33</sup> and by 1963 there were 250 locations and 3,000 students.<sup>34</sup>

In spreading nationwide, the three main issues were: 1. securing locations, 2. thoroughly educating instructors, and 3. gaining the understanding of students' caregivers.

First, concerning securing locations, when first starting out Toru would get permission to use places like kindergartens and assembly halls and would dispatch his high school students there. However, as the scale of the organization grew, there came to be problems with that strategy. Thus, he shifted to a franchise model where he would establish centers and hire people from around the country to be instructors.<sup>35</sup>

Second, in the case of instructor education, first in 1950 he began to produce a magazine directed at instructors called "Yamabiko" and worked to ensure that they thoroughly understood the educational concepts and methods. Again, in 1963 he held regular instructor training workshops with the goal of stabilizing the level of instructor quality.<sup>37</sup> For his own part, Toru daily visited centers and management offices to communicate the effectiveness of the teaching method.<sup>38</sup>

Third, in gaining the understanding of students' caregivers, at first, when a center was opened Toru would gather the parents of neighborhood children through leaflets and host big social gatherings.<sup>39</sup> However, garnering understanding for the Kumon Method—which uses learning materials completely different from school textbooks—was no mean feat. As the spread of Kumon Method centers progressed, recognition and understanding of the Kumon Method gradually spread by word of mouth, but it was the impact of *Kumon shiki sansū no himitsu* (The Secret of Kumon Math), published by Kosaido in 1974, that was the real turning point, and there was a great leap in people's understanding of the Kumon Method.<sup>40</sup>

#### (5) Kumon Spreading through the World

The first overseas Kumon Method center was established in New York in 1974. Overseas operations were initially based around providing education services for Japanese children in the local area, but when people came to hear about the superior level of the Kumon Method students, centers by local instructors for local people came to progressively grow.<sup>41, 42</sup>

"From the beginning I had the dream of spreading Kumon Method math throughout the world. Math is a language shared by the whole world and has an international nature. Doctor Schweitzer made a contribution in Africa through medicine, and I wanted to bring math into the African continent. I wanted to meet Doctor Schweitzer in Lambaréné in Africa and shake hands with him."<sup>43</sup>

Toru's ambitions now extended beyond the borders of Japan. The fact that the Kumon Method was able to bring universal results, no matter the country, is surely because the Kumon Method originally aimed at the cultivation of solid foundational skills without concern for year of schooling. Presently, the necessary support systems have been widely established through local subsidiaries, and it is now possible to offer the same level of quality seen in Japan's learning materials and instructors.<sup>44</sup> The student numbers overseas of 80,000 in 1988<sup>45</sup> increased even more—with, for example, the introduction of language instruction—and as of 2013 had grown to 2,860,000.<sup>46</sup> The Kumon Educational Method is, without doubt, the pride of Japan around the world as a revolutionary educational system.

(On terms used above)

\* Company and brand names, etc. are trademarks or registered marks of the respective company.

\* Terms such as "Ltd." describing company status have been abbreviated throughout.\* Honorific titles of address have been abbreviated.

### Main Awards Received

2007 "Japan 300 High-Service Awards" (SPRING: Service Productivity & Innovation for Growth Committee). Japanese education service expanding overseas: Kumon Institute of Education

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## Happenings in Japan (A Four-Frame Cartoon)





## Introduction of Website Feature: The URL of our website will change.

The URL of our website will change from April 3, 2017.

The contents of our website will be moved and included in the JPO website. If you access our website after April 3 using our current URL, you will see a redirect page linked to the JPO website. Thank you for your understanding.





# **Editor's Notes**



Hello. Mitty here. The Japanese year goes from April to March, so this marks our final edition for 2016.

Our selection in this issue from the "Top 100 Japanese Innovations" is Kumon.

It occurrs to me that the three characteristic aspects of a Kumon education—individual study, refinement of study content, and tailoring to the student's abilities and speed of learning—are in fact the same as those at the core of building the curriculum here at Cooperation in Human Resource Development.

There are many people who have realized their dreams by maximizing their leaning through Kumon, and there is truly nothing that could make me happier as a coordinator when I hear stories from our alumni, as IP Friends, of achieving advancement in their careers in the same way, after participating in these lectures. In Japan we have a saying, "One time, one meeting," which refers to being prepared for times in our lifespans when we will meet someone for only a single encounter, that we may be mutually sincere to one another on such occasions. Not only should we keep this idea always close to our hearts and remain on the lookout as we live, but I also believe APIC possesses this value in abundance. Whenever we meet someone in our lives, a connection is made. I hope that once everyone finishes their courses here, we remain connected through this magazine, "Connections."



### Hello, I am Chiho Omori.

Although we are now in March, Tokyo continues to have cold days. Fortunately, spring is just around the corner. One of the things spring in Japan is known for is cherry blossoms. Throughout Japan, when cherry blossoms reach full bloom many people go out to enjoy their beauty. This is called "HANAMI" or "Cherry Blossom Viewing." Around this time TV news stations continuously update their forecast for the day of "full bloom." Cherry blossom season is between the end of March to mid-April. In Japan this is also the season of school entrance and school graduation ceremonies. Cherry blossoms are therefore a symbol of both new encounters and a parting of ways.

In spring cherry blossoms are not enjoyed for their beauty alone. Cherry blossoms are used in cooking, items such as towels and scarves are dyed using cherry blossoms, and the scent is also extracted and used in various items. In addition, cherry blossoms can be seen in all forms of art. The cherry blossom is also used on the 100 yen coin.

Why do the Japanese love cherry blossoms so much? One of the reasons is that the cherry blossoms are in full bloom for such a short period of time, after which they scatter in the wind. This is considered very beautiful by the Japanese. Cherry blossoms are only in bloom for about 10 days. If you have the opportunity to visit Japan in the springtime, please be sure to experience the beauty of the cherry blossoms.

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