

## **Special Seminar given by Dr. Manatunge at the Department of International Studies**

The following is a rough transcription and summary of some of the major issues that Dr. Manatunge discussed during his special seminar at 11:00AM on February 19<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Manatunge is visiting from the University of Moratuwa of Sri Lanka. He decided to take this opportunity to give students and some faculty members his views on academia, as well as first hand experiences on how he has progressed as a researcher.

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There are 3 types of people in academia. The 1<sup>st</sup> person is always trying to be smart and different. This person may not survive, because society may not accept him/her as a member. The 2<sup>nd</sup> person is always disagreeing and fighting with their advisor. The 3<sup>rd</sup> person feels very inferior because he/she compares himself to his/her seniors.

### *The 1<sup>st</sup> person who is different*

Robert Morris was a very intelligent man. A Phd student in the late 80s, he developed the first worm, and intentionally released it on the internet in an effort to see how many computers were connected to the internet. He attached his worm to an email and it went out of control. His intentions were benign, yet he could not foresee the destruction his actions would cause.

The entire system was brought to a standstill. He was arrested, tried and convicted and he expelled from Cornell. His sentence was 400 hrs of community service. After completing his service, he went to Harvard to complete his Phd. The software he developed at Harvard was sold to Yahoo later on for millions of dollars, and he later went on to become a professor at MIT.

Everybody cannot be Robert Morris. My own ideas as an undergraduate was not to be too a smart person, if you are not a genius. Geniuses are very rare. Don't try to be too smart, but be in the mainstream. Don't rely on being smart unless you can prove that you are a genius. Survival should be the first aim.

### *The 3<sup>rd</sup> person who feels inferior*

When you are at the beginning of your research career, you always feel inferior, you don't know how to conduct research, how to survive through the research. I believe that you have to feel inferior. That is where you start but at the same time you have to look at other sensei's work and be impressed. But you must say to yourself, why not me? I should be able to do the same. Feel inferior, but from there onwards you have to have the strength to build a research career.

There are things you must avoid at the beginning of your research career. Don't ever write in isolation don't work in isolation. Approach your advisor and other senior academics. Don't mix only with the graduate students in your year, go beyond that, talk to your seniors. And talk to seniors of other areas as well. Don't ever try to publish without any help. You must expose yourself. Be ambitious but not without others' support.

There are some rules of thumb to becoming a successful researcher. First you have to find 1 thing and focus on that particular subject, and then try to diversify.

Ultimately you will find your own niche, or your cocoon, and open it up. Don't ever stagnate, and always try to proceed as an academic.

#### *How to diversify*

There are no rules. It's not diversification if you go too far outside of your realm, that is just diverting away from your research area. This is not the idea of diversification

*My experience:* While studying civil engineering, I was researching water pollution for masters at the imperial college in London. I was referred to some activities at Saitama University and things took off from there. He gave me some topics that I liked to work with related to the Mekong, watershed management and development of navigation. I did some work with him during my Phd, which had nothing to do with my doctorate but I was cooperating for my own satisfaction. Today I continue to work with professors like professor Nakayama.

You will understand diversification more when you take courses outside of your department. However, you must think about what to take. Do not take courses completely unrelated to your field.

#### *Research*

There are 3 kinds of research categories, basic, applied and practical research. After deciding which realm you are in, think about the contribution of that new knowledge. You must contribute to your field of study otherwise you aren't making any mark. And for students you need to look beyond research, who do you want to be and when. Long periods of deliberation will be necessary.

You have to enjoy what you're doing, most students begin and complain that research is very difficult. However, this is just a transient stage, when you move on past the difficult stage, when you go past what you thought was impossible, it will become fun. This will lead you to success as a researcher.

Once you finish your research degree, you should have 4 basic skills described on the spectrum (see handout). At all times as a researcher you must ask where am I on the spectrum? Can I grasp an arbitrary area, understand the core of the problem, identify it and solve it? Position yourself on this spectrum.

A personal paradigm is also necessary to identify your area of expertise. One cannot be an expert of all areas. Think about the importance of moving from the general to specific. A person who is about to start a research career should realize that expertise will not come automatically. Expertise will come after accumulating knowledge. Knowledge creates expertise. You have to repeat the same things maybe infinite times until you become an expert.

However, there are 2 flaws that anybody can fall into. 1<sup>st</sup>, when you are conducting your research and you see that the data can not answer the question addressed you are stuck. When this is realized, no amount of statistical torture will give you results. 2<sup>nd</sup>, if your method is flawed or not sound you cannot go back and rectify the data. Methodological design is very important and must be done very carefully and thoroughly.

#### *Why publish?*

Why, what, when, and where to publish? In circles of academia, one must publish to secure positions, promotions and research grants. Excellent students will need to graduate with some publications. The mantra is, publish or perish. Publishing is a method of communicating your research to the academic world. If you wish to be noticed you must take these opportunities to let others know of your efforts. This does not necessarily mean print media, you just have to expose your self and others will judge where you stand. Contemporary measures of the quality of research is through the number of papers. Researchers will like to cut the research into thin pieces, like salami. Sometimes this is very useful because of strict deadlines of their financiers. You must to tell the grant agency or financiers that you did some good work otherwise you will not secure any more money. However, this must not harm the core of the research findings.

To reach a higher level of recognition, you can climb in 3 steps or 1. 1 step might be difficult but in the end, what matters is you rose up to the desired level. Nobody will ask you if you achieved your goal through 1 publication or 3. Thus, the yardstick of number of papers might not be very productive.

You may want to use trendy statements or attention grabbing phrases. This may improve the status of your research, however one must be careful of losing your message in the flashy words. What is most important is the content.

Publishers also wish to reduce their costs. Longer articles will cost more, so they encourage authors to publish shorter papers. This proves to be very difficult for some researchers. One should not make assumptions more than the minimum necessary. If you need to explain a theory, make the minimum assumptions or else the rest will become redundant. Theories should be simple but not too simple. Over simplicity will harm the core.

If you are a researcher you should never plagiarize or copy others' work. This is stealing, theft. Never do this. Also never lie, cook data, or manipulate findings to fit your faulty assumptions. The fabrication of data, or fraud, is only self serving. You may be satisfied, but you are misleading others. This is self-service that will not promote the progress of anyone in your field. You have to be responsible, accountable, if you are saying you see these things, if you're wrong you have to admit it and be accountable. No matter how much you publish, if you are not ethically sound, you will still perish.

## Impressions From Participants

- I think this semi was very interesting, I got answers to many questions which I am thinking about.  
Prof. Kunishima always says that pure research is important and never doing research for papers. But you said papers were important.
  
- Firstly, I was amazed that you are very very passionate because you usually look cool. And I really enjoyed your lecture. The contents of your lecture are implicative. I'm sure I will do a good research that contributes the society, makes decent style as research paper, and does not tell a lie.  
Thank you very much!! I hope you will enjoy the rest of your stay in Japan and come to teach us again!
  
- It was very interesting and aspiring seminar. The advices presented were not only for junior researchers like master students but also for senior researchers like post-doctoral students. Especially, an advice for diversification was very important and I agree to the point. At the same time, I feel that keeping the balance between main subject and subsidiary subjects would be difficult.  
Other difficulty which was not mentioned is to cope with the pressure to produce some novel ideas in the research. Staying in the main stream (flow) is quite important, but researchers always feel being pressured to produce something different from others. This seems to be another issue on the balance. Although each researcher has to search for the answers to these dilemmas on their own, the lecture given would be great assistance in thinking of the future strategy as a professional researcher.
  
- I think this lecture is interesting for students in this department. Students in this department have various academic backgrounds and disciplines. And they often try to research a topic convining their own specific fields with other fields. But I feel this is not so easy for us.  
To be honest, I could get a little things from your lecture. One of reasons for it is a lack of my English listening skill, I am sure. I couldn't understand all of your lecture. I feel disappointed. But your lecture made me want to know your research and your life.  
Thank you for your great lecture !!!

Organizer: Mikiyasu NAKAYAMA (Professor)  
Student Organizer: Yuka TOGUCHI (M1)  
Proceedings: Yu Maemura (M1)

