
2014 JOINT MEIJI-ICU SEMINAR



On November 30, 2014, 57 international students from a diverse range of fields gathered for a day of interaction and discussion. A joint effort by the Meiji University and the International Christian University (ICU), this seminar is conducted yearly to bring international students together, particularly those who are under the Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development (JDS) Scholarship Program, to engage in academic discourses and learn about each other's research. This year, the joint seminar was held at ICU. 16 distinguished faculty members from both universities were also present. Aside from the research presentations by the students, poster sessions and round table discussions were organized to provide students with more opportunities to share varied opinions and to understand different perspectives.

Platform for Knowledge Development: Students' Research Presentations

Of the 57 students, 18 of them particularly 2nd year Master students gave presentations on their preliminary research findings. This session is deemed an important opportunity for students to build upon constructive remarks coming from a wealth of audience and make use of these feedbacks to better their research papers. The students' research topics touched upon a wide range of issues, from economic, to social, and environmental.



Visual and Interactive: Poster Sessions



Designed to encourage students to have one-on-one interactions, the poster sessions were also considered as a strategic platform for students to proactively engage in conversations. Other students who did not participate in the research presentations got the chance to showcase their research interests through visually guiding viewers on relevant information displayed on the poster boards and answering significant questions from their viewers. More notably, the presenters also had the opportunity to highlight their country's cultures. These sessions cultivated a less formal dialogue among students, thus making the discussions more fun and interactive.

Market of Ideas: The World Cafe Small Group Discussions

A very innovative approach, the World Cafe administered in this seminar, successfully engaged the students on lots of interactions and fruitful discussions. This session was transformed even more creative as it was coupled with the mind mapping technique/tool to draw out collective knowledge and ideas from the students. The basic idea in this World Cafe cum mind mapping is to group the students together around cafe-style tables that are set in conversational clusters and each group was tasked to draw a mind map after thoroughly brainstorming.



Particularly noteworthy is the way students were engrossed to open and creative conversations as they got many chances to interact with other groups and gather varied ideas. Fifteen (15) small/breakaway groups were formed and students within these groups discussed current as well as emerging global issues that were mainly anchored on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The small group discussions were guided with three focus questions. Groups 1 to 5 were tasked to answer the question, "What Future do you want?" This question brought about a more personal and individual viewpoints on the kind of future the students envision. On questions, "Is this the future do you want and which draft SDG do you think is the most important?", groups 6 to 10 carefully reviewed the proposed SDGs and determined which SDG needs to be prioritized. Finally, the question, "What are your proposed SDGs and targets for you country?" entailed students' context and country-specific perspectives on SDG targets that they believe their governments should give precedent to. After successive rounds of discussion, the students collectively linked ideas and presented their syntheses to the general audience.

Just in the Nick of Time...

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire in 2015, we are in a crucial time to scale up efforts in framing the new set of development goals. The youth, who are among the meager voices in the development process, must become more proactive. It is high time to put the young people at the forefront of shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

Therefore, students like us should always look for venues and platforms in which we can converge together and engage in critical discussions. In this light, the Joint Meiji-ICU seminar not only gave us the opportunity to improve our research but also served a valuable means for us to carry out our role in shaping the future we envisage. The seminar was just in time for us students to articulate our vision and chart our aspirations from 2015 and beyond.

Marifah M. Agar

