

Milestones of a Life in Teaching

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If you asked any teacher if their road to success was simple, I am sure you would get the answer that it is accompanied by many difficulties. When I first came to Japan, my goal in life was to be a manager in a restaurant or hotel because this is where all my practical skills were developed while I was working my way through college. However, in 1988 I met my Japanese wife and decided to move to Japan to find jobs in this area, but they were limited and I found it necessary to find other forms of work to get by. The only job available for me with my bachelor's degree was teaching in a technical junior college that specialized in preparing students for entering into colleges abroad. This was the beginning of my career as an English teacher.

After working at a technical junior college for a short period of time, I found a job closer to home teaching international children and an opportunity to put my management skills to good use. The International school I worked at gave me the opportunity to help develop a curriculum with the help and expertise of an International School Service provider that helped get the International School started. I enjoyed teaching children from the ages of 4-to 16-years-old in all grades 1-8, six years of Elementary School and the first two years of Junior High School. However, after two years, I felt a need to move forward more and develop my language teaching skills further, hence, I decided to start graduate classes and work part-time at Universities instead of pursuing my one full-time job at the International School. This was an important step in my life because it was highly risky considering I had one child and a wife to support, but it led to a full-time job in a small Junior College where I worked for two years until I was accepted to a full time Masters of Science program at Georgetown University. At this time, I took all the money I had saved and put it into traveling to America with my family

and studying there till I graduated 18 months later. Six months of prior studies in Tokyo were accredited to the Master's Program making it possible to return to Japan 18 months later with a graduate diploma, A Master of Science in Applied Linguistics.

After returning to Japan with my Master of Science Degree in Applied Linguistics, I thought it would be easy to get a job, but I found out otherwise. The location of my home in Kitakyushu was not convenient and there was no college full time jobs for people with specialization in my field. So, I sent out resumes all over Japan willing to sell our home and move to a place where employment was better. It was to my great fortune that a position opened up in Kyoto and I worked there for 8-1/2 years as a full-time Lecturer, but it was still only a renewable contract position. The last two years of this 8-1/2 year span I decided to pursue my Doctors Degree despite the fact that I had three children by now, a wife to support, and her parents to look after. But, fortune was always on my side because I was able to graduate with a Ph.D. from Nagoya University and land a full-time contract job in Shizuoka for one year while I searched for a full-time tenure position. I decided to apply for only Tenure positions during my one year of employment in Shizuoka and I was fortunate to find three openings out of all the universities in Japan for an Associate English Professor. It was at this time I made my final move to Sendai where I have lived and taught English Language Teaching skills to graduate students who pursue teaching positions like I did following my acquisition of my Ph.D.

Teaching in a Graduate School especially one that has over 75 percent foreign students makes the courses very interesting and challenging to teach. It is always a pleasure to do joint presentations with graduate students and see them accomplish their goals upon graduating. Most students whom I have advised are now University instructors or professors in their country when they return there.

Overall, the past 30 years of Language Teaching has been the most challenging, but most important time for me helping me constantly

improve myself in all languages I pursue. I study Chinese and Vietnamese in addition to my constant improvement of Japanese because I travel to these countries frequently and do Language Training Sessions to language teachers there. I also meet many students who desire to come to Japan to study. Even though I look forward to the time when I can retire from teaching, I know that teaching and learning languages will always play an important role in my life.