How to teach Fair Trade for Children

by

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Abstract

Fair trade is a system where producers trade with suppliers in a fair manner as well as being a social movement that helps producers make better trading conditions. In Western countries, there are fair trade products in supermarket stores, and consumers are willing to buy them. On the other hand, in Japan most people do not know the meaning of fair trade. Therefore, for my graduation project I made a picture book with the goal of helping children understand the system of the fair trade, which is unfamiliar with people in Japan. The book is for fifth- or sixth-grade students in elementary school and its story is based on my experience with fair trade in a developing country. This thesis clarifies the definition and process of fair trade and the actual situation in the world.

フェアトレードとは生産者と供給者が公正に取引する仕組みであり、社会運動でもある。欧米ではスーパーマーケットなどでフェアトレード製品がたくさん販売されており、積極的に購入する消費者も多い。それに対して日本では「フェアトレード」という言葉を知らない人が多い。そこで、日本でまだ馴染みのないフェアトレードを子供たちに知ってもらうために絵本を創作した。絵本は小学5・6年生を対象にしており、ストーリーは筆者が途上国で経験したエピソードが含まれている。この論文ではフェアトレードの定義やアンフェアトレードの現状、フェアトレードのプロセスなどを明らかにする。
I have experience working as the leader of the fair trade club at our college for two years when I was a second and third year student. I would often plan and run several events related to fair trade with my colleagues such as ethical fashion show, chocolate project, fair trade bazaar and so on. These events’ aim was to improve public awareness of fair trade in Japan. I feel that most people in Japan do not know the meaning of fair trade very well in comparison to people in Europe. Some people in Japan also have never heard of the word. I would like people to know what fair trade brings us and how beneficial fair trade is for us.

The reason why I joined the fair trade club is related to my studies at OJC. I did not know the meaning of “fair trade” until I met “topic studies” in my first year. We learned about crises of life such as environmental problems, population issues, poverty and fair trade in those classes. I found that poverty was greatly related to manufacturing companies’ activities in developing countries. Their activities often caused an unfair trading condition as well as lead to our unethical practices for shopping. At the same time, I also found that fair trade activities respected people and our planet by promoting natural farming, traditional techniques of making crafts and encouraging sustainability. Moreover in my opinion, fair trade products are beautiful, delicious and healthy! These are some of the reasons why I got interested in fair trade and I joined PEACE, the name of the fair trade club at our college.

In my mind fair trade is different from charity activities. In the case of charity only activity like collecting money, the living level of workers in poor countries does not improve because it is no more than just temporary help. On the other hand, fair trade activity is not only charity such as donating money, resources or building schools, but it is also a business. Thus, it is possible to trade continuously, and then fair trade can make a different in workers’ lives in developing countries and it can support sustainability, which is the main difference between unilateral charity and fair trade.

My Graduation Project

I would like to research how to teach fair trade to children. As part of my GP I will design and make a picture book with the goal of helping children easily understand fair trade principles.
As for why I would like to teach fair trade to children, the trading process is complex. Most people in Japan do not tend to think that poverty in developing countries is directly linked to their shopping practices. It seems like the Japanese consumers are not familiar with producers in developing countries. If children can understand the system properly, they may think it is a big problem or the existence of unfair trade practices are close to them. They also may simply buy fair trade products when they grow up. I know it is difficult to understand fair trade especially for children so I have to understand the best ways to teach fair trade to children. I also realize that even if children can understand the trading system and how important fair trade is, they are not the person who makes purchases in their family. The purchasers are mostly parents! My research considers this fact as well.

**Fair trade Background Information**

**What is fair trade?**

Fair trade is a system that allows producers who are in low positions in society or who have low economic status to have a better trading condition and stand up for themselves. Here are the Fair trade standards (WFTO, 2012):

1. To provide people who are in low position socially and economically with opportunities to work and support themselves.
2. To clarify the rules and guidelines for the trade and the management.
3. To make deals fairly between buyers and producers with reliance, alignment, and humanity. Buyers pay money in advance to producers for production on demand.
4. To pay money which producers regard as fair.
5. To abandon child labor and forced labor.
6. Not to discriminate in social status, nationality, religion, disability, gender, and political belief.
7. To obey rules required by law and the ILO (International Labor Organization) in order for producers to work in a safe environment.
8. To make producers improve their techniques like craft or agriculture and production control.
9. To promote fair trade, raising public awareness of its necessity and aims, and then do marketing in good faith.
10. To take a good care of the environment by using materials with less CO2 release or energy consumption.

In fact, companies tend to satisfy customer’s needs by market research in order to maximize their profits. If society requests companies to sell ethical goods, they will try to respond to it. On the other hand, if society is just eager to buy products as cheaper as possible, they also will try to respond to it by cutting down the costs like producers’ salary as much as possible. Therefore, it seems like it depends on consumer’s needs for spreading fair trade in Japan.

**Problems without fair trade**

There are some problems without fair trade. Generally speaking, companies or buyers tend to pay a low price improperly for the products or producers’ wages in order to get money their pockets or prioritize their profits and then they sell the products at cheap prices. Producers’ living condition is getting harder. Children cannot go to school so that they have to help their family work all day for survive. People cannot get away from poverty forever.

Producers in developing countries are often forced to work for less money or unpaid overtime because trading companies tend to reduce costs such as their salaries in order to get as much money as possible. Producers fall in depression. Their children have to help work for their living and so they cannot go to school. Without the Fair trade standards which the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO, 2012) sets, some famers or workers are put in working conditions that are dangerous even if they are children.

**How to do fair trade**

There are many different ways to do fair trade. I will describe how we do it at OJC. Our fair trade club members sell products purchased from one of two routes: the Simon Project and
Asia Women Empowerment Project (AWEP). As for the Simon Project, I have carried on this project with a person in Africa. It is called the “Simon Project” because his name is Simon. In 2010 I met him for the first time and he participated as a guest speaker in a class at OJC. He lives in Samburu, Kenya, East Africa.

Some of us visited him during summer vacation this year (2012) in order to see how his life is going on. It took about 10 hours by a share-ride bus called “Matatu” from Nairobi to Samburu. Simon, his mother, his wife and his five children welcomed us into their hut. He keeps many cows, sheep, and goats next to their room. I had a chance to observe the rural town where Simon usually buys accessories and to meet the woman who sells them. I introduced myself “I am Chika, a student in Japan. I sell the accessories to other students at our university in Japan!” She said “Ashe Oleng, Chika” means “thank you” in English. I was very happy to talk with her. Actually she cannot understand English, so Simon translated English into the Samburu language. Through my observation and communication with him and his family, I felt that Simon loved his livestock very much and he was happy thanks to our fair trade efforts.

The process we use in the Simon Project is as follows. Simon buys beads accessories in Kenya and sends them to us. Our fair trade club members sell the products in a bazaar at a school, and then we send all of the sale proceeds to Simon for the next purchase of products and for his family’s living expense. Actually he is a member of the Samburu tribe which is similar to the Masai and he makes a living as a nomad with his family. The staple foods of the Samburu people are sheep or goat’s milk, however when there is no rain during a drought in Samburu, the grasses in the field where his sheep and goat eat die and do not grow and so the sheep and goats cannot produce milk which the Samburu people must have every day. So, then it is hard for them to live. That is why I began to carry out this project. Thanks to the money raised by fair trade, Simon got a new goat to raise for its milk and his oldest daughter can now go to a private school.

When it comes to AWEP (Asian Women’s Empowerment Project), an NGO in Kobe, they support their counterpart groups in the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal and Indonesia. For example, in the Philippines one group supports Filipinas who have had children by Japanese men and are
raising the children alone or who were victims of human trafficking. This group aims to help the Filipinas live independently by training them to make small pouches or accessories. AWEP proposes the designs and buys all of the products made (AWEP, 2006). The OJC fair trade club members make a contribution by selling such products at a bazaar in our college.

**Types of fair trade goods**

There are many kinds of fair trade goods including coffee beans, chocolate, cotton, soccer balls, and so on. Coffee beans come from Nepal, Brazil, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Chocolate is made from cacao beans grown in Bolivia and sugar grown in the Philippines. Cotton used to make T-shirts come from India. Soccer balls are made in India, too. We also have traditional crafts or little items such as handkerchiefs to sell. Many of them are primary products of the country that are often exported.

**Fair trade education in Japan**

Is there any fair trade education in Japan? I visited my elementary school and asked a teacher about fair trade education. Unfortunately, he did not understand the meaning of fair trade. After I explained that, he could understand and said there was no fair trade education but he taught his students about poverty problems and gets students to collect the top of plastic bottles to help other countries’ children. He pointed out that it was difficult to teach “fair trade” to his students. Therefore, I must not explain first out of the blue “fair trade is blah-blah-blah.” First I need to explain the poverty problem that exists in the world. For junior high school students New Horizon in 2012 has English texts written about fair trade. It seems like students can study English grammar and fair trade as well.

**Developing a Picture Book to Teach Fair Trade**

My goal is to help children easily understand the fair trade system through developing a picture book. There are three reasons why I am carrying out this project. First of all, I would like children to learn fair-minded thinking. Second, it is easy for children to understand fair trade by pictures. Finally, there are many picture books related to fair trade such as banana, chocolate or
soccer ball. Thus, I would like to show children my real story and want children to know this is also one of the ways that fair trade happens.

In order to prepare to make my book I learned about an approach to development education called photo-language and I also looked at several picture books. I will describe photo-language and the picture books I examined in the next section.

**Photo-language**

There are many approaches to development education one of which is Photo-language (Otsu, Ota, Nakayama, Fujiwara, & Morishige, 2012). Photo-language is an approach that looks at photos or pictures of development issues and has a group talk about what the photos or the pictures show them. It is an effective way to seek to improve imaginary skills and develop empathy skills in order not to see issues or problems as somebody else’s problem. It is also easy for students to adopt an outlook of compassion for people in developing countries and to take action. Reading about the photo-language technique, underscored the value of picture books as teaching tool for development education. I think it is important to use visuals in order to help students imagine developing countries.

**Fair trade for kids—a bilingual picture book**

In order to prepare to make my book I looked at a picture book that was written about fair trade for children. *Let’s think a little about shopping* (Minney, 2001) is a picture book written both in Japanese and English and was written by a little boy who is only seven years old. He wrote this book to tell what he felt about children and their families in developing countries and he also wrote about his family. The purpose was to get rid of the exploitation of workers in developing countries. The book reminds us of who makes things and how things come to us. It asks us to think about where the money we pay is going. Nobody wants to pay a lot of money for goods; however, if you only pay a little money you may be taking advantage of the people who made the goods and they will suffer and feel sad because they will get less money without having enough food. The book helps children see that farmers are usually poor even though they work very hard because companies and shops do not pay enough. Famers are asked often by
companies to buy chemical fertilizers, which are expensive in order to grow farm products speedily. On the other hand, if famers work through fair trade, they can feel at ease and fair trade brings them enough money to live and builds schools in their villages for their children. With fair trade children do not have to work. Everyone feels bad if they know children in other countries are forced to work and make products all day without security. The book shows that if we cooperate with fair trade, we can help people get rid of poverty.

I learned that this picture book is made by a little boy and written on the side of children. In addition this is also written in English and Japanese. I thought both languages are easy to understand for children. However when I showed this book to my elementary school teacher, he pointed out this book might be a little difficult for even fifth and sixth graders. Working and flow of money are probably a little difficult to understand. Therefore I think I should make a much easier picture book for elementary students. As for the pictures in Fair Trade for Kids, I feel they are not so good because the pictures contradict the story; for example, although the author explains something as being unhappy, the pictures do not look like unhappy. To promote a better understanding, the pictures also should match the situation clearly.

**Chocolate and Blue Sky—based on a true story**

*Chocolate and Blue Sky* (Horigome, 2012) is a book for 3rd and 4th-year students in elementary school and was written to help them think not only of agriculture in Japan and other countries, but also about the significance of fair trade. It was selected an assigned reading book of National Book Review Competition for juveniles in 2012 by the School Library Association, The Mainichi Newspaper, Prime Minister’s Cabinet Office, The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and Suntory Ltd. More than four million applicants enter this competition each year. I believe this book winning this award means fair trade can be prominent for elementary students.

This story is about a man, Eric, who came from Ghana to study Japan’s agriculture and the Japanese farm family who accepted him as his host family. Since Ghana is the world’s second largest cocoa producer the family expected that Eric would have lots of chocolates from Ghana.
However he did not have any chocolate; moreover, he had never eaten chocolate in his childhood. He explained although most people, even children, in Ghana worked very hard at the cocoa grove, they did not know chocolate’s flavor because chocolate is a luxury good in Ghana; they are only paid a very small amount of money and this was one of the Ghana’s problems. The family was shocked.

Eric has a big dream that after studying Japan’s agriculture, he can help people in Ghana make food by themselves in order to not depend heavily on other countries to import foods. The mother in the family recommended fair trade chocolate as one of the ways to solve Ghana’s problem because although this chocolate bar costs us three times more than normal chocolate bars, it is made of only cocoa beans grown by farmers who are paid fair prices. The mother also gave it to her son who thought seriously of this problem.

I think this book give students who do not know fair trade and Ghana’s negative reality a chance to know about that. I think this book can help students understand the importance of fair trade because it is based on real story. I am also interested in how this book influences students and would like to know their reaction to it.

**My Picture Book**

After researching about picture books, I designed my own bilingual picture book called Simon’s Beads. The reason why I wrote the text in both English and Japanese is because graduation projects at OJU are written in English and the picture book is part of my graduation project. In addition, people who do not know Japanese can read an English – Japanese bilingual book. As more people read my book, awareness of fair trade will be higher than ever. And finally, it also made it easier for my professor Steve Cornwell to check it. This picture book is based on my experience of working with the fair trade club and my trip to Samburu, Kenya, East Africa. I am sure that a real story will help make readers understand the importance of fair trade. I drew the artwork to clearly explain what happened. The Appendix shows my final book.
Conclusion

In conclusion this thesis showed clearly what fair trade is, what bad situations occur without fair trade and what good situations can happen when people implement fair trade. It reconfirmed the importance of fair trade. I also found out how to teach fair trade to children by using picture books. In order to promote better understanding, using easy words and clear explanations and visuals are indispensable. In addition a real story makes readers feel it is much more important rather than using a fictional one. Japan is developing fair trade education more than I thought before I worked on this graduation project. Now I expect that as more and more Japanese people are educated about fair trade when they are young, they will buy fair trade products naturally in the future. For my further study, I would like to show elementary school students my picture book and research how they feel about it. Then I can improve my picture book based on their feedback.
References


Learn how to spot it—and how to protect children of all ages from bullies at school. Education. Health. It's often a struggle for kids this age to part with their things. "Even if your child wants to trade, she may worry about making a mistake and giving away an item that she will miss dearly later, despite the fact that she's getting something of value in return," says Mackay. It's worth pointing out that we all second-guess ourselves at times and that her goal should be to aim for a "win-win" solution. That means not settling for a trade she doesn't feel satisfied with and suggesting that she ask the other child if she is happy with the trade too -- so t Go to MOVE IT Math™ on the web @ moveitmaththesource.com for lessons using the Fair Lands™ blocks and Ten Land blocks to teach, with understanding, the concepts of base and place value, how a place value numeration system works, and the operations of addition and subtraction. The site is full of great lessons on basic math -- the arithmetic of work, business, and adult living -- that are effective with ALL children, including those who don't know what they ought to know by now and those who need enrichment. Please give us a chance to help you boost grades, increase test scores, and improve atti A brokerage account for children can be a great learning tool, but it's most effective if you keep these tips in mind. Learn more about investing for kids. Investing isn't just for adults: If you want to teach your kids some valuable lessons about money and the power of investment growth, helping them open a custodial brokerage account can be a great start. Investing for kids. One of the biggest keys to successful investing is a long time horizon, and kids have that in spades. For example, for kids who want to practice trading stocks, you should ensure the broker charges low or no trade commissions. If your kids just want their money to grow in a hands-off way, look for brokers with a large selection of low-cost index funds. Need help?