

**“Globaleyes”:
A Partnership between The Nippon Foundation (Japan)
And
National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology (USA)
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Introduction

In 2001, The Nippon Foundation of Japan and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology came together and constructed a vision of forming a global network to improve the postsecondary education of people who are deaf. Recognizing that education, government, business and industry are confronted with the myriad challenges of globalization; these two organizations saw the need to form a collaborative that would address postsecondary education with “globaleyes.” As a result, The Foundation and NTID formed the Postsecondary Education Network International (PEN-International).

Internationally, there are a limited number of postsecondary education programs for people who are deaf or hard of hearing—particularly in developing countries. In an effort to address the postsecondary education needs of men and women who are deaf, The Nippon Foundation established a series of endowed scholarships in the USA for deaf men and women from the developing world. The Foundation established these scholarships to provide people who are deaf with an education so that they could return to their home countries, become role models, and serve as leaders in the deaf community of their respective countries. The scholarships were considered as much a long-term investment in the future of a countries’ deaf population as it was an investment in the recipient of the scholarships.

The actual outcome, however, proved to be quite different from the original intent. For the most part, scholarship recipients successfully completed their degrees but chose not to return home. Rather, they remained in the USA and pursued a career. While this was of tremendous benefit to each individual scholarship recipient, it had little or no

impact in the home country—except to propagate a “brain drain.” That is, some of the best and brightest left their country for a postsecondary education and never returned home.

This led NTID and The Foundation to partner in an effort to create a network that would improve postsecondary education, primarily in developing countries, so that students could receive high quality education at home that led them to enter society and the workplace to compete with their peers who hear. PEN-International established three operational goals to achieve this end in participating countries:

- Improve teaching, learning, curriculum development and instructional development;
- Increase the application of information technology and instructional technology in the teaching and learning process; and,
- Expand career education opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing men and women internationally.

NTID and The Nippon Foundation

NTID

Rochester Institute of Technology, through its National Technical Institute for the Deaf, has been educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing on a campus designed primarily for people who are hearing for the past 40 years. NTID is one of the eight colleges of RIT—a major national technological university. At RIT approximately 1100 deaf and hard of hearing men and women study and live with their 14,000 hearing peers. NTID supports close to 500 deaf students who are mainstreamed with their hearing peers in the academic mainstream in one of the other seven colleges of RIT (close to 75% of these in science, technology, engineering and mathematics curriculum). The university has the largest number of mainstreamed postsecondary-level deaf students in the world. To serve these men and women who are deaf, the institute employs more than 120 sign language interpreters and more than 50 captionists. The other 600 students study within NTID for sub-baccalaureate degrees in paraprofessional fields with their peers who are deaf. In effect, NTID serves as a national technical community college for these men and women.

For 40 years then, NTID has been honing pedagogy, support services, access services and instructional technology for students who are deaf in the educational mainstream and in self-contained classes and programs. Since a basic mission of NTID is “To share its knowledge and expertise through outreach and other information dissemination programs,” it was determined that NTID should reach out to other countries around the world with proven strategies that could be adapted or adopted for use to improve postsecondary education in those countries.

The Nippon Foundation

The Foundation was established approximately forty years ago, proposing that the world is one family and that all mankind are brothers and sisters. At the time, the world was far from being one family. Instead, the world was in a rather precarious position where provocation by the Super Powers could lead to international incidents and conflict. Fear, not hope, dominated the world. But it was during this time that the late Ryoichi Sasakawa established The Nippon Foundation, with the overall goal of working for a better world.

The Nippon Foundation envisions a world in which politics and ideology, religion and race are transcended—a world where we no longer suffer from hunger or disease. The foundation therefore set about working to remove barriers to full participation in society for all peoples, by enabling people who are now impoverished and physically and socially handicapped, to be the arbiter and creator of their own lives. Since its founding in 1962, The Foundation has dedicated itself to supporting primarily the efforts of those striving for independence.

Historically, Japan has as very little experience with private philanthropy. Hence The Nippon Foundation, as a non-governmental organization, has taken the lead and the initiative in undertaking numerous philanthropic projects and programs around the world. The foundation has attempted to help people to help themselves by supporting programs that enable those who are least able to become productive members of society. In this way the foundation has contributed in part to the realization of a better and more prosperous world.

One of the prime working units of The Foundation is the team which focuses upon basic human needs, such as: agricultural technology support, leprosy eradication,

provision of prosthetic devices, disability related support and the like. Given the challenges being faced in its scholarship program for deaf men and women from developing countries, the Foundation determined to establish a program to improve postsecondary education in developing countries and cap its scholarship program for deaf men and women. The Nippon Foundation decided to undertake this effort so that potential postsecondary education students would not feel compelled to leave their home country to receive a quality tertiary education.

A University/Foundation Partnership

Clearly, the mission, interests and goals of The Nippon Foundation intersected nicely with the mission, goals and skill set of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. As a result, in 2000, a concept paper was developed by James J. DeCaro with a team of NTID colleagues and presented to The Nippon Foundation. The Foundation was favorably inclined and requested a full proposal from NTID. The result was a university/foundation partnership that was established at NTID in 2001—PEN-International. The National Technical Institute for the Deaf provided the organizational skill and its 40 years of knowledge in the field of postsecondary deaf education and The Nippon Foundation provided the funding for the program

PEN-International was conceived as a collaborative and cooperative network of colleges and universities around the world that provide postsecondary education for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This network was conceived to propagate improvement of faculty teaching and the application of innovative educational and instructional technology in education. In effect, the program was established as a world-wide, faculty training and development network that utilized innovative technology to address locally defined teaching and learning needs.

The PEN-International Vision

From its very inception, PEN-International has based all its efforts upon four very basis principles:

- The program exists as a collaborative that serves to address locally defined needs and priorities. The program does not presume to know what a participant institution or country needs.

- The political, religious, economic, geographic and pedagogical traditions of a country mediate the length of time required to realize a needed change or intervention.
- Solutions to identified needs and priorities will be developed and implemented as a collaborative undertaking. Solutions will never be imposed.
- Solutions that have been implemented successfully in one country may or may not be appropriate for adaptation or adoption in another country.

These principles have proven to be useful and essential guiding tenants as PEN developed the infrastructure for delivery of the training and in the development of training solutions themselves. It was essential that the program avoid at all cost the pitfall of functioning in a condescending fashion with developing countries. These countries may lag behind the developed world as defined by economic indicators but they certainly do not lag behind in creativity and intelligence, and the desire to provide high quality education for their citizens who are deaf. In fact, the developed world has a thing or two to learn from the developing world in terms of making do with limited resources.

The PEN Network

PEN-International selected a key partner institution in each country in which it works. The partner institution was chosen on the basis of four characteristics:

- The university had a program for the postsecondary education of deaf students.
- There was strong support from upper administration for the program for deaf students.
- The program for deaf students was recognized within the country as one of quality and there was a strong commitment to continuous quality improvement.
- The program had as its goal preparing men and women who are deaf to enter careers that would allow them to participate in society and the workplace on a par with their peers who hear.

Partner institutions in each country were selected with the expectation that they would

be/become recognized centers of postsecondary education excellence in their respective countries—an institution to which other postsecondary educational institutions that serve deaf students would turn as a model for educating these students.

The PEN partner institution in each country serves as a major node of the PEN-International world-wide network. Each partner (node) is expected to work in collaboration with the other country nodes of the world-wide network and to coordinate activities via PEN-International headquarters at NTID. In addition, each major country node is expected to become a hub within its home country that is connected to other institutions in the home country to form a country-wide collaborative network or federation for improving the postsecondary education of men and women who are deaf. Each PEN world-wide node becomes the hub or center of excellence in its home country.

From Importer of Knowledge to Exporter

Once a partner institution was selected in each participant country, a needs assessment was conducted in collaboration with the partner to determine what issues were most in need of attention. On the basis of the needs assessment a series of potential alternatives were presented for addressing the needs. Many of these solutions were based upon the experience of NTID. The partner then worked together with PEN-international headquarters to determine what solutions could be adapted or adopted for use in meeting those needs. If none of the posited solutions were acceptable, PEN-international works collaboratively with a partner to develop a solutions custom tailored to its particular needs.

Depending upon the solution selected, objective-based workshops and training were developed and a cadre of faculty from the partner institution was brought to NTID for preliminary training. Training is always offered by skilled practitioners in the content area of the training—be they from NTID or elsewhere. Simultaneously, any technology that needs to be installed in the home institution is installed so that when the faculty members return home from the training, they can use the skills and knowledge they have learned immediately. After the trained faculty members have applied the knowledge and skills they have learned for a period of time in their home institution, follow-up training is conducted by the same faculty members who conducted the initial training at NTID. The follow-up training is conducted either on site in the home country, via

videoconferencing, or through a combination of both. In addition, all the materials used for PEN-International training at NTID, via videoconference or in the home country are freely available to participants on the PEN-International WWW site—usually in the language of the home country. Parenthetically, anyone who wishes can access these materials freely by visiting the PEN WWW site.

In effect, PEN trains a cadre of faculty who **import** knowledge and skills that they can use to improve the education of men and women who are deaf. Through the initial training, application of the knowledge and skills learned and the follow-up training, these faculty members become **self-sufficient** in the use of these skills. Once they have become **self-sufficient**, they are then expected to train colleagues at their home institution in the application of these skills and competencies.

However, the training cycle does not end there; for once they are proficient at training their colleagues at their home institution, they are then expected to **export** what they have learned to other colleges and universities and train faculty members who educate deaf students at those institutions. In effect, PEN-International propagates a training ‘ripple effect’. PEN-International provides support as this training is being conducted initially but eventually partners assume the full responsibility of **exporting** knowledge and skills within their home country.

Propagation of the Network

While PEN is currently active in China, Japan, the Philippines, Russia, Thailand, Viet Nam, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic and South Korea, over the past six years PEN has focused upon its four initial partner countries—China, Japan, the Philippines and Russia. In three of these countries, a country-wide network is developing.

In Russia, the PEN node is Bauman Moscow State Technical University which has now brought three other institutions together to form PEN-Russia. This network covers the breadth of the country: Novosibirsk State Technical University in Siberia, Vladimir State University outside of Moscow and TISBI in Kazan. These four institutions have signed a formal agreement establishing PEN-Russia and have been able to use PEN-International’s support for their efforts to leverage funding from their universities, municipalities, regional governments and the Russian Federation for their efforts to improve the postsecondary education of deaf men and women.

In Japan, the PEN node is National Tsukuba University of Technology. The university has brought together 13 colleges and universities from across Japan to form what they call PEPNet-Japan (Postsecondary Education Network Japan). The network is modeled after the Northeast Technical Assistance Center of NTID—a grant funded program of the US Department of Education. PEPNet-Japan was established with initial funding from PEN and is now receiving the bulk of its funding from the government of Japan.

In China, the PEN node is Tianjin University of Technology which has partnered with three other institutions to form PEN-China: Zhongzhou University, Beijing Union University and Changchun University. These four institutions of higher education have created a videoconferencing capability with the support of PEN-international and they are now using this technology for faculty cross-university training and to offer courses across the four universities to deaf students.

In each other country in which PEN works, the programs are still at the **importer** and **self-sufficiency** stages of development.

Historically, PEN makes a comparatively large initial investment in a country. Over time it is expected that institutional partners and the government of a country will assume the responsibility for the continuation of the program in the country. This essentially has proven to be the case in the countries in which PEN currently works.

Challenging Sensibilities

There are attitudes, philosophies and pedagogy in partner countries that differ from those that prevail in the USA or at PEN-International's host institution, NTID. Irrespective, PEN is very careful not to impose those attitudes, philosophies and pedagogy upon the faculty it trains from partner institutions.

For example, there are certain occupations that deaf people can access in the USA, and which NTID students prepare for at RIT, that are not available in some countries in which PEN works. In an effort to challenge the sensibilities of faculty from one country, during a PEN training session at NTID, a deaf national female from that country who was studying in a major at RIT that was not available in the home country served as a teaching assistant for the PEN training. As a result, faculty members were presented with a conundrum—they were being trained in a skill set that they did not

possess by a student from their country who could not receive such an education in her home country.

As another example, PEN-International works in countries that have differing philosophies regarding communication in education, i.e., some use an oral/auditory approach, some use sign language and others use both. While PEN-International's host institution, NTID, has a communication philosophy that is different from that of most PEN partner institutions, PEN is very careful not to impose the NTID philosophy upon any of its partners. Rather, the approach that PEN-International takes is to challenge the sensibilities and the status quo at participant institutions. For example, PEN exposes faculty members from partner institutions to successful deaf role models who serve as trainers and utilize a variety of different communication approaches, from those for whom ASL is their first language and do not use speech to those who are predominately 'oral.'

At PEN-International, there is a saying that is applied to trainers and trainees alike, "If they participate in a PEN sponsored event and do not have their sensibilities challenged or do not feel uncomfortable, they have not learned."

Influencing Public Policy

In addition to having an impact on teaching and learning, PEN-International is also attempting to have a positive impact upon educational policy in the countries in which it works. Doing this is a very sensitive and diplomatic undertaking that requires the development of mutual trust and respect over time. In the end, how a recommendation for improvement is developed and stated is as important as the content of the recommendation itself.

For example, in China PEN-International undertook a qualitative research study in an effort to collect and develop recommendations for the China Disabled Persons' Federation as regards improving postsecondary education in the country. The study was conducted openly and with great care and is presented in detail in the next chapter of this volume. Those recommendations were presented to the CDPF and officials of the CDPF, PEN-China and the PEN-International home office have agreed upon a set of training objectives to address one of the most pressing issues highlighted in the report—preparation of sign language interpreters.

Conclusion

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology and The Nippon Foundation have formed a productive and effective partnership that is having a positive impact upon the postsecondary education of deaf men and women in the countries in which PEN-International is working. At a time when the world is shrinking but forces are acting to tear people apart, PEN-International has been drawing people from diverse cultures together to productively address the postsecondary education needs of men and women who are deaf. In effect, PEN has been attempting to use globaleyes to improve the postsecondary education of men and women who are deaf.