

From Global Resource Management to Advanced Liberal Arts

Masanori Naito, GRM Program Coordinator,
Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University

■Introduction

Global Resource Management (GRM) was selected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to be part of its Leading Graduate School Program in 2012 under the category of interdisciplinary programs, and was launched in October of the same year.

Interdisciplinary is normally understood as an area of humanities and social sciences. However, from the conceptual stage, I have developed a fusion of humanities and sciences as a pillar of the program. In today's world, there are too many disputes and clashes, and the first step when discussing interdisciplinary is to provide specific methods to help people who are experiencing catastrophe.

This is not something that can be accomplished solely with humanities and social sciences. Where can we obtain clean water? Where can we obtain electricity to power computers? What can we do to obtain the means to transport supplies needed for daily life? Needless to say, the restoration and maintenance of infrastructure is essential in supporting livelihood. Conflicts in ethnicity, religion, and national sovereignty are issues which cannot be separated from access to infrastructure. In order to address these issues, Doshisha University founded the GRM Leading Graduate School Program, a comprehensive program integrating the Graduate School of Global Studies from the social science aspect to study the causes of conflict and peace-building, and the Graduate School of Science and Engineering for fundamental science/resource and energy science in infrastructure.

At the time, the world was approaching a period of chaos. The Arab Spring, a series of pro-democracy protests that began in 2010, prompted brutal suppression or civil war in the countries whose governments were targeted by the protests. Civil wars displaced immense numbers of refugees. As a result of the civil war in Syria, more than 6 million refugees fled into neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, precipitating a crisis that continues in 2022. In addition to creating numerous victims due to civil war, Libya lost its ability to control its borders and became a stop for irregular immigrants and refugees from across Africa on their way to Europe. During 2015, about 1.3 million refugees poured into Europe, being much lower than the numbers taken in by the countries around Syria. This, however, had a sudden, destabilizing effect on the 27 EU member nations, leading to a rise in refugee regulations, exclusion of immigrants, and hatred of Islam. Willingness to accept diversity on the part of countries' domestic administrations declined, and the EU strengthened border controls in all regions.

In Palestine, no improvement was found in the continuous conditions of distress, where Gaza remains sealed off by Israel for more than a decade. This program has actively accepted international students from Gaza in Palestine. It goes without saying that Palestine faces some of the most serious challenges in today's world. We believe that it's deeply meaningful to give young people from the area an opportunity to think about the potential for overcoming difficulty while residing in Kyoto. However, in 2014, right in the middle of that effort, Israel launched a major attack, making it difficult for international students to reach Japan.

For students in such areas, it is an urgent priority to develop technology for obtaining high-quality electricity that allows them to use computers, and to secure power using locally available materials. One student worked to develop an uninterruptible power supply for computers to help deal with the frequent power outages caused by Israel's attacks on power plants. The central role played by electrical engineering in this program will be a model for future graduate studies combining science with humanities. Infrastructure, particularly water, electricity, and transportation, is essential for survival in the poorest countries (and regions). The Graduate School of Science and Engineering taking lead in the scientific aspect of the GRM curriculum related to infrastructure engineering was key to the program's success in the combination of science and humanities.

Moreover, the Graduate School of Global Studies, does not comprise of a single, specific discipline within the study of humanities. Faculty members have diverse backgrounds in areas such as political science, development studies, peace studies, and geography. Integrating this diversity into the program broadened the opportunities in practical research in terms of understanding and solving global issues. The three founding principles of the Graduate School of Global Studies—"de-Eurocentricism, issue-focused, solution-oriented"—were a good fit with the GRM's spirit and direction.

However, merely offering courses in humanities and social sciences in parallel with other sciences and engineering does not result in effective graduate studies. A number of universities have attempted similar experiments in the past, and in most cases, have lacked the philosophy for overcoming differences in disciplines and paradigms for an effective integration. GRM is distinguished by its reliance on the study of applications for both the humanities and sciences. As a result, we could avoid spending time on non-productive discussions involving fundamental ideas and principles.

It is productive to consider the integration of natural sciences such as mathematics and chemistry with humanities such as philosophy and history. Though such a fusion may be possible, it is a discussion which exists in a sophisticated and speculative dimension, leaving most students uninterested. That does not mean it is without meaning, however, the purpose of this program is to find solutions to current issues in the real world rather than spending time pursuing metaphysical discussions.

Nevertheless, combining different applied studies is not easy, as neither engineering nor global studies

consider the necessity of the other. To begin with, researchers specialized in social sciences are traumatized from their student days, considering natural sciences as an area of personal weakness. On the other hand, researchers who specialize in science and engineering do not find the need of humanities and social sciences in their own research.

You could say, on a symbolic level, that it was the philosophy of “conscience” which played the role in joining these two groups together in GRM. Further to in-depth studies of a given subject, Doshisha has established fundamental educational principles in order to achieve the education of “conscience”. This approach is closely related to the fact that Joseph Hardy Neesima became the first Japanese person to study liberal arts at Amherst College.

■What is the purpose of education?

At Doshisha University, the desire for conscience drives people to ask this question, and is considered common sense in both education and research.

This had meaning when developing the GRM concept and applying to JSPS. At the time of selection for its programs, MEXT took universities’ founding philosophies and leadership visions into account. As a policy of the Japanese government, the Program for Leading Graduate Schools hinged on fostering the development of global leaders through advanced research.

As the program coordinator, I participated to the JSPS screening session along with the President of Doshisha University. When an examiner asked what kind of leaders we sought to train, what came to my mind was not Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos, but Mother Teresa, and that’s how I responded. Half of the examiners were from universities, and the other half were from private companies, and they did not seem to have expected my response - but I wasn’t trying to be surprising. Certainly, in a society dominated by an air of neoliberalism, the vision of what a leader should be presumably involves competing successfully or pioneering new markets through innovation. However, for me, the purpose of education did not revolve around the type of human resources it would train.

I do not deny the importance of training winners within the capitalist system. However, even if all educational institutions made a concerted effort to train such graduates, they would by no means be successful. That is because—and this reflects the essence of neoliberalism itself—winners receive recognition, while losers are forced out, even in education. The entrance examinations that serve as gatekeepers to education inevitably must sort out winners from losers, but it would be a mistake to make this sorting process the purpose of education once students have entered universities and graduate schools.

A professor from Doshisha’s School of Theology later pointed out that Mother Teresa was a Catholic. It was

irrelevant to me whether she was Protestant or Catholic; I simply chose someone who placed conscience at the root of leadership to serve as the program's vision of an ideal leader.

With the large investments to create graduate schools that would train leaders, MEXT and JSPS, as organs of the state, sought to clarify the philosophies and approach to leadership of the universities where programs would be developed. In that sense, not only Doshisha, but all private institutions had an advantage. Since private universities are founded by people with a passionate commitment to education, they all have some sort of founding philosophy. By contrast, national universities lack such philosophies. What they have is the purpose at the time they were founded as a matter of national policy; it is not like they founded themselves.

MEXT later seemed to have lost interest in this sort of graduate school. The Program for Leading Graduate Schools was followed by a program called "Doctoral Program for World-leading Innovative & Smart Education," which subsequently ended. Now there are discussions of allocating the returns from an enormous investment fund to key universities. It seems to me that the government is urgently trying to create a vessel that will earn international praise.

Philosophies and approach to leadership of the educational and research institutions vying for program status with regard to training graduate students were considered when candidates were evaluated 10 years ago. Today, that approach is giving way to emphasis on returns of investment of research and development. If the cost of developing research centers is dependent on profit from fund investments, then that is an investment. Naturally, that would be impacted by global economic trends. With the exception of Japan, fiscal policy in most developing nations has switched from easing to tightening, and the economy finds itself at the mercy of unforeseen circumstances in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. It's likely that the world economy will fall into a recession. Under these conditions, there's a risk that the budget for research centers will be impacted by the performance of the fund's investments.

■ GRM's track record and its significance

GRM's efforts centered on combining infrastructure engineering with the global environment, international relations, and area studies under the context that current conflict and environmental problems in the world throwing the future existence of humankind into crisis. As one example, consider the civil war and refugee problem in Syria, where the GRM program carried out field training.

Since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011, indiscriminate bombing by the government and Russian forces in areas held by anti-government rebels displaced massive numbers of refugees both inside and outside the country. Currently, 6.8 million people have fled as refugees to neighboring Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, and others have made their way to EU countries.

Needless to say, refugees fled to neighboring countries due to the destruction of not only homes, but also infrastructure such as water lines and electricity. UNHCR and NGOs immediately swung into action, however efforts required medical care, clean water, electricity, and housing. Many Syrian refugees preferred to live in inexpensive, overcrowded housing in neighboring countries rather than temporary housing. Currently 3.8 million refugees are living in Turkey, where they must support themselves through cheap labor.

The NGOs and international organizations offering aid send in experts in individual fields like health, medicine, and education, however, experts with comprehensive understanding of the civil war and insights to the refugees' future are needed. GRM sought to train such people. The "resource" in Global Resource Management refers to natural resources, infrastructure resources, and human resources.

Why does the civil war still continue after more than 10 years? It goes without saying that there are structural problems with the UN Security Council. Multiple resolutions condemning the Syrian government were submitted, but unsurprisingly, they were shelved by the veto right of Russia, which backed the Syrian administration. On the other hand, the U.S. has continued to exercise its veto rights as Israel's supporter with regards to the Palestinian problem.

Among the neighboring countries which accepted refugees, only Turkey has crafted a comprehensive policy and made efforts to end the war itself. Lebanon was not in a position to offer active support for refugees due to the breakdown of its national finances. Jordan worked with Western nations and UNHCR, but rather than getting involved with Syria diplomatically, the Jordanian government focused on extracting relief funds from the U.S. and international organizations. The Turkish government harshly criticized the Assad regime for continuing to attack its own citizens before beginning discussions with the regime's supporter, Russia, in 2016. That's because hostility alone provides no basis for easing the suffering of people trapped in a vortex of difficulties. In 2017, three parties—Russia and Iran, which support the Assad regime, and Turkey, which supports the anti-regime forces—began a series of discussions (known as the Astana process) founded on the assumption that they would become guarantor states with regard to the Syria problem after the civil war ends.

In 2014, the GRM program conducted field training where students visited the city of Gaziantep in southern Turkey near the Syrian border to study refugee living conditions and NGO activities. The students learned much from seeing refugees living in poor-quality housing and people with serious injuries stretched out at first-aid facilities. There is a significant difference between the slides shown to students in classrooms in Japan and reality. Such a field trip was only conducted once due to the high costs involved, however it would be extremely valuable in the future for students to be able to interact with people who find themselves in the most difficult conditions during that year if the funds can be secured. Civil wars and other conflicts are not the only causes of crises. Crises also are also caused by devastating disasters harming the livelihood of people as well as by nations suffering financial collapse causing neglect of the people suffering from absolute poverty.

Since 2017, GRM outputs have been discussed at international conferences. Slovenia, a small country in the western Balkans, is a member of the EU. The country's Foreign Ministry hosts an international forum in the city of Bled every September. In this way, Slovenia draws on its unique knowledge as a small country to hold what is essentially an open think tank once a year. Participating countries' leaders, the EU, international organizations, researchers, journalists, and students (on the floor) come together to discuss the most important issues for Europe that year.

In 2018, when Europe's refugee crisis was the main topic, Péter Szijjártó, the foreign minister of Hungary, which opposed accepting refugees, and Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the foreign minister of Turkey, which accepted the most refugees of any country, engaged in an intense argument. Students use a special conference app to submit questions to the moderator, who selects interesting questions and poses them to panelists. GRM graduates asked bold questions that were chosen. The following year, Doshisha University's GRM program and the University of Ljubljana's Humanities and Social Sciences doctoral degree program co-hosted a panel at which graduates gave presentations about the situation in the Middle East.

The post-Cold War world has seen a series of conflicts and civil wars. Moreover, under the banner of its war on terror, the U.S. launched wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Libya's civil war intensified when NATO forces conducted a bombing campaign with the goal of ousting its dictator. Myanmar displaced an enormous number of refugees when it failed to recognize the existence of the Rohingya people, while various West African nations, including Mali, continue to clash with Islamic extremists. And war continues today in Ukraine. It's not only autocrats in developing nations who cause humanitarian crises.

There are limits on what is possible when we ask practitioners to ease the difficulties of vulnerable people in such a world. As UNHCR occasionally asserts, there are too many people like refugees who need support. No matter how hard activists and experts in fields like food, medicine, and education work, they will be unable to deal with this never-ending series of crises in the absence of efforts to halt conflict, civil war, and war and to bring such conflicts to an early cessation. It is not just refugees themselves. Refugees flee to neighboring countries, and are not offered a high economic standard. The presence of large numbers of refugees between countries of roughly the same level leads to shared poverty.

Even if refugees are lucky enough to reach a developed country, the cold treatment and xenophobia of Western society await them. The year 2015 was one of refugee crisis in Europe. The arrival of more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Europe caused intense xenophobia and Islamophobia in EU member countries. That backlash was not limited to Hungary and Poland. Political parties with an avowed determination to expel immigrants, strengthen refugee controls, and, above all, exclude Islam emerged in Germany, the Netherlands, France, Denmark, Sweden, and Austria, too. The vision for human rights and freedom put forth by the EU was not supposed to draw distinctions based on religion or ethnicity. But that vision is collapsing

as many in society feel it should not apply to refugees, many of whom are believers in Islam, or asylum-seekers. The U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand continue to assert universal values in the form of freedom and democracy while realizing fair treatment of refugees and immigrants, but in Europe, xenophobia has risen to a level that precludes optimism.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Ukraine war were a serious blow to economies worldwide, driving a rapid increase in the number of impoverished people. The Ukrainian people are facing serious suffering, however the problems of poverty and hunger are expanding in Africa and Asia as well. Moreover, the number of environmental refugees displaced by climate change is certain to rise rapidly in the future, as is made clear by recent massive flooding in Pakistan. Whatever the causes of humanitarian crises, whether conflicts involving states, religion and ethnicity, a nation-led war on terrorism, or terrorism and destructive activities of extremists, the world faces the urgent question of how to quell these calamities. It's fair to say that no country is far from these hazards.

To deter these clashes requires literacy in the sense of being able to understand the status quo in today's world. Education is the only way to provide such literacy to young people. It is here that the international significance of GRM's philosophy lies.

■The Advanced Liberal Arts concept

Doshisha University began offering a graduate-level liberal arts education that cuts across multiple graduate schools in 2021. The next step for GRM is to grow programs developed to date and build a liberal arts program founded on "conscience" at its graduate schools. Working in conjunction with the university's "Next Environment" program and other offerings, this effort will provide a more advanced, more practical liberal arts education, including for adult learners.

Looking into the history of the liberal arts, we find that it was originally academic discipline and technique for liberal people. If we trace its methods back to ancient Greece and Rome, we find that it comprised seven disciplines that distinguished themselves from techniques for making money or establishing an occupation. The *trivium* consisted of three subjects: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The *quadrivium* consisted of four subjects: astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, and music. Together, these seven subjects were known as the "seven liberal arts" (*septem artes liberales*).

That is the typical explanation given for the liberal arts, but there is no special significance to such ancient origins, as the citizens who were free men derived that freedom by virtue of slave labor. The phrase remained in use in Medieval Europe. If you think about it, it's odd that the concept of the liberal arts, which was created in polytheistic Greece and Rome, retained currency at a time when the heart of scholarship consisted of deepening Christian theology and scholasticism. However, the three- and four-subject groups developed

and deepened, with the former centered on understanding the Christian gospel and the latter, on understanding how the works of God are realized in the natural world.

In the Western world, recent times have seen the intellectual attempt to understand the work of God removed as a major purpose of learning. Which brings us to today. These days, the Japanese expression meaning “liberal arts” (*kyōyō*) has become a sort of threat, a way to intimate that if you lack such learning, you’ll end up inferior to others. That trend has extended to every subject area, so we have world history “as liberal arts,” geopolitics “as liberal arts,” finance “as liberal arts,” and investment “as liberal arts.” It is obvious if you think about it, but such expressions do not work in English. They are too trite.

I feel a strong objection to the use of “as liberal arts” as a modifier in Japanese. Liberal arts is neither learning you gain so that you’re superior to others nor learning you gain after learning lessons as a failure. All knowledge other than the specialized knowledge you need for your own job is liberal arts. When you encounter some difficulty in life, you can pull the knowledge and logic you’ve already learned out of the “drawers” in your mind’s cabinet to help you solve those problems. I consider all such learning liberal arts.

The liberal arts studied by Joseph Hardy Neesima at Amherst College presumably comprised such knowledge. Neesima added the concept of “conscience” to that liberal arts knowledge. The word “conscience” combines *con*, meaning “something shared,” with *science*, meaning “knowledge.” There are various theories as to why the meaning of morality was added to shared knowledge, but it probably reflects the influence of Christianity.

The next concept I am planning is liberal arts founded on conscience. There’s no need to limit that concept to the traditional seven liberal arts. The program will include civil engineering, electrical engineering, environmental science, information science, geology, geography, political science, economics, anthropology, sociology, financial theory, and area studies, to ensure we do not take our eyes off reality. Naturally, we will also need to incorporate applied development theory, peace studies, gender theory, and other disciplines into our perspective.

The program will encompass every discipline needed to address the challenges faced by mankind, from basic science to applied studies. It is fine to share courses with undergraduate students, but it will be more effective to establish a group of liberal arts courses exclusively for graduate students. Then we will establish coursework in service of GRM’s objective of “easing the difficulty of those people in the real world who face the most difficult situations.”

We will not, however, just offer a selection of courses without in depth thought. We will arrange courses with the ultimate goal of finding ways to rescue people from humanitarian crises in keeping with the concept of “conscience.” Consequently, it will be necessary to establish courses in a flexible manner so that the

selection can be changed to reflect whatever is the greatest problem at any given time. Continuity is necessary in order to train students, but immediacy is also necessary in order to rescue people. By combining the two, it should be possible to realize an advanced liberal arts program at Doshisha as an educational and research institution that was conceptualized and realized by Joseph Hardy Neesima. I myself have no time left as a university man. However, beyond my own time I see the knowledge we need to perceive and suppress danger before it develops into a crisis that threatens humanity.