



What Tide~ enabled me to see ...

Hiromi Yamashita reflects on her experiences at Tide~ and how they influenced work she is now doing on environmental awareness and community engagement in coastal issues in Japan.

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Tide~ was the reason I left for the UK to study for my master's degree, and Tide~ was the reason I returned to work in Birmingham after a few years. Development education in the UK has been an inspiration to many Japanese educationalists, especially teachers whose consuming passion in the classroom is to draw out deeper, more complex thoughts from young people.

The Tide~ materials addressed the topics that concerned young people but were not taught in schools, for various historical and institutional reasons. The qualities of the Tide~ materials are rooted in the contributors' experiences, insight and their connection with students. Although this was clear to the developmental educationalists in Japan, they couldn't understand how teachers could produce high quality materials in such busy teaching schedules.

When I moved to Birmingham 1997 and joined the first Tide~ project meeting, I remember being very surprised by the laughter and relaxed atmosphere, which were in sharp contrast to the topics the teachers were dealing with. I soon realised that the openness and trust in each other created a safe environment for honest discussions, with critical comments on each other's work and ideas for a more "fun" approach in the future.

While I was in Birmingham, I was asked by Japanese educationalists and organisations to buy Tide~ materials and ship them back. They spent a vast amount of money, but now how wonderful it is that Tide~ has decided to share them online for many of us to enjoy from anywhere in the world!

Tide~ taught me to enjoy using a critical eye to look around me, and imagine what others who might disagree with me would say on various topics. I put those learnings together in an article called ... **'The problems with a 'fact' focused approach in environmental communication'**

"It is increasingly clear that better coastal development needs to include the participation of citizens and stakeholder groups in decision making from the beginning."

"It seems common for decision makers to assume that local knowledge and opinions are not valuable, nor "valid," since citizens in coastal communities, especially those in rural areas, are regarded as "less educated," and inclusion of alternative forms of knowledge in the decision making process has generally not been allowed."

In Japanese environmental communication materials even fun animals are often presented as if **"they know better"** than others

Even when the issues contentious



Isahaya Bay project with a major dyke, reclaimed land and a reservoir.

It is common for the traditional "banking education" system to be criticized; however, there still seems to be a belief that the more factual information one can convey, the more citizens will become aware of the issues. The problems of "fact-focused communication" were not clear so I examined such practice in Japan and elsewhere.

This fact-focused approach is problematic because ...

1. it ignores diversity in the facts provided to people;
2. it reinforces the hierarchy of knowledge; and
3. it ignores the "myth of nature" among information receivers and senders (how each person understands the relationships between themselves and nature).

In the article, key recommendations for incorporating a critical education approach were introduced. They included:

- a. utilising locally available environmental information on contentious issues;
- b. investigating particular terminology used and missing information (including tacit knowledge);
- c. encouraging critical learning about statistics and pictorial representations.

I used various examples from Japan and other parts of the world to argue these points. Yet, the core learning I carry with me comes from what I learnt from Tide~. Now I am a teacher myself and my students still enjoy the Tide~ materials! I hope the work we do in our small patch of the world opens up young people's minds as we enjoy these experiences.

We have a copy of the article. Please let us know if you would like to read it. [Email](#)