

Multidisciplinary Seminar Report
Title: Leading Graduate Program Seminar

Name: Novi Syaftika

Date: February 22, 2016
Venue: Large Conference Room, IDEC.

Theme: Bridging Science, Society and Politics.

Lecturer: Professor Tateo Arimoto

I was excited to join this seminar due to its very interesting topic. Prof. Arimoto started the presentation by talking about how important it is to be a global leader. We as students in a Leading Program should acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to properly understand problems from different perspectives - from the narrowest to the broadest view possible. Prof. Arimoto described this range in two ways. First was as a hierarchy beginning with the atom and extending out to the universe, while the second focused on time starting with the birth of the earth to our current world. Global leaders should consider phenomena and problems using a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond our known borders.

Prof Arimoto related the topic to the Phoenix Program which has a research focus based on nuclear science (the aftermath of the Fukushima accident). He described how a technology like nuclear power can change the world, like what happened to Japan when both Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated by atomic bombs.

Bridging science society and politics is a very challenging task. One of the positive efforts to foster collaboration between people in science, society, and politics is by developing communication through professional associations. These types of collaboration can be used to build consensus across these disparate groups. During the Q&A session I asked if he could give us some examples of successful stories from Japan that could be utilized by other countries. He pointed to the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) that encompasses all fields of science and works to promote the role of science in all areas of Japanese society. This organization consists of 210 elected members and roughly 2000 members-at-large. One of the council's important missions is to

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advise and make recommendations from a science perspective on government policy. It's imperative that scientists of a nation come together and attempt to achieve consensus in order to deliver recommendations from a united front to both policy makers and stakeholders. By working together and achieving consensus scientists have more power to oppose or support particular government policies.

The science council of Japan is a very interesting example that developing countries like Indonesia could follow. I believe we also have a national science board as part of the government policy making team, however it may not be so effective yet. I have the impression that the science councils in my country are not yet united and work from within their own field. This makes it difficult for these groups to achieve consensus on particular issues which means that their influence is limited when it involves politics or certain conflicts of interest. However, Prof Arimoto also emphasized that the Science Council of Japan has few members compared to the equivalent organization in the USA. The SCJ also has room to improve in order to have a stronger influence in policy making.

Another participant of the seminar asked a question regarding society at large and scientists within society, and which aspects the government tended to focus on when making policy. Personally, I think the government's main task is to decide what's best for society. Therefore, ideally the government should make decisions that balance as many aspects of society as possible and make sure that it offers an overall benefit for society. In this case "society" also includes scientists as they are people within the society. Recommendations or opposition that scientists offer should be the basis for policy making where the prosperity and safety of the people whom are affected is the ultimate goal.

This seminar was inspiring for me as someone who is working on technology dissemination for the government in my home country. Technology dissemination is a very challenging yet interesting job. The information,

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experiences and examples that were given in this seminar were beneficial and relevant for my work.