

# Trends in World Educational Media

## Based on Entries to the JAPAN PRIZE since 2000

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Forty-five years have passed since the JAPAN PRIZE International Educational Program Contest was established by the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) in 1965. The contest is aimed at improving the quality of educational programs around the world and contributing to the development and fostering of international understanding and cooperation. For the 37th JAPAN PRIZE held in 2010, a total of 409 entries were submitted by 226 organizations from 64 countries and regions.

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(The original Japanese version including various program photos is available at [http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2011\\_03/110307.pdf](http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2011_03/110307.pdf))

Sachiko Imaizumi Kodaira has been engaged in research regarding the educational uses of the media and children and the media since joining NHK in 1977. In both areas, she examines both the Japanese situation and international trends. She has been participating as a research observer of the JAPAN PRIZE for over thirty years and served as a juror on the screening committee in 2006. For the JAPAN PRIZE 2010, she gave a special lecture on "The Trends of the World's Educational Contents: Grand Prix Japan Prize Winners Revisited," which included program screenings taken from the JAPAN PRIZE Video Library (October 23, 2010).

Over the years, the contest has reflected the characteristics of educational broadcasting around the world amid the evolving media and educational environment of each era. In the early days of the JAPAN PRIZE educational programs focused mainly on supplementing the school curriculum in such subjects as language and literature, math, and science, and basic education such as through adult education courses in foreign languages, vocational training, and literacy. However, as society experiences ever-increasing change, programs have increasingly focused upon the variety of issues each society faces.

The themes of educational programs have diversified to include environmental concerns, cross-cultural communication, war and peace, poverty and child labor, HIV/AIDS, drugs, bullying and discrimination, issues in child psychology, family issues, child abuse, and teacher-student relations. Many of these issues are increasingly shared by countries worldwide. Another characteristic is that the necessity of facing the harsh realities of society, once a theme of programs largely addressed to adults, has in recent years become the theme of programs addressed to children. Broadcasting has the journalistic potential to face such present-day issues, and this is an excellent feature of television programs including those of the educational kind. Thus, in contrast to the school-curriculum-based programs that were once the leading entries to the JAPAN PRIZE, those dealing with contemporary issues are increasing, both in the list of entries and among the prize winners.

The JAPAN PRIZE has also adapted to changes in the media. Between 1965 and 2001, the contest targeted broadcast programs (radio and TV programs until 1989, and starting in 1991 TV only). In response to the rapid spread of the Internet, which began in the late 1990s, a Web Division for websites linked to TV programs was established in 2002.

In 2008, major changes were made in the criteria for the JAPAN PRIZE, expanding eligibility to “all educational media with audiovisual content, including videos, websites, games, and other interactive materials.” At the same time, the title was also changed to the JAPAN PRIZE International Contest for Educational Media.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The divisions and categories of the contest have undergone changes since 2000, and as of 2010 (37th JAPAN PRIZE), there are two divisions: The Audiovisual Division (consists of five categories: Pre-school, Primary, Youth, Continuing Education, and Welfare Education), which encompasses audiovisual content produced for the purpose of education, and the TV Proposal Division (proposals for educational TV programs from countries/regions with limited budgetary or technical means). A total of 360 entries were submitted for the Audiovisual Division and 49 for the TV Proposal Division, of which 78 from the first division and 5 from the second division passed the Preliminary Selection process and made their way to the Final Selection process in October 2010.

It can be said that educational programs and content entered a new era beginning in the year 2000. Together with the JAPAN PRIZE participants, I have viewed quite a number of educational programs and other content entered in the contest from around the world and exchanged comments with participants. In this report, I will use examples from specific programs to introduce the major trends of the past ten years, along with highlights of their content and viewer characteristics, and observations about the changing media environment.<sup>2</sup>

## **1. Fresh Perspectives on Social Realities**

### ***Programs and e-learning applications addressing drug abuse***

Spreading drug abuse among young people is a problem of concern in recent years in Japan, but it was the issue that had earlier gained widespread attention in North America. The 2000 Grand Prix Japan Prize winner, “Through a Blue Lens”<sup>\*</sup> created by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB),<sup>3</sup> is a program highly praised for its innovative perspective that has left a lasting impression even to this day.

The program portrays a team of police officers in Vancouver that patrols designated areas and films the lives of drug addicts. This footage is used to teach young people about the negative effects drugs can have on both mind and body. The team builds a relationship of trust and confidence with the drug addicts and works to gain insight into their thinking and concerns. By showing this film to young people, the police hope to communicate the horrors of drug use. The 52-minute documentary is a profound program tracing the endeavors of the members of the police team.

At one point during the documentary, an officer explains that “the addicted drug users understand that they are a burden to their surroundings, and by speaking about their experiences, they are hoping to give back to society.” The program was made possible by the trust established between the police team and the drug addicts. Using to

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<sup>2</sup> A summary of past award-winners and other participants can be found in the reports issued by the Secretariat, as well as on the website (<http://www.nhk.or.jp/jp-prize/>). See also Kodaira 1997, Kodaira 2003, and Kodaira 2007.

<sup>\*</sup> Capitalization in the titles of entries of programs to the JAPAN PRIZE has been adjusted for consistency in this article.

<sup>3</sup> The National Film Board of Canada is a public organization established in 1939 for the purpose of promoting and fostering Canadian movies and TV. The NFB produces and distributes movies and TV shows in addition to maintaining and making accessible its archives. The NFB produces high-quality programs beneficial for use in schools and other educational settings, and is known for its teacher’s guides. The NFB has submitted many entries to the JAPAN PRIZE and many have been awarded prizes.

best advantage the characteristics of television to visually and emotionally appeal to the audience, it succeeds in drawing viewers into a world portraying people and situations not normally encountered in everyday life.

This documentary was shown not only to young people, but also to newly recruited police officers for educational purposes. The program is also a DVD teaching resource, as well as being shown on the NFB website. A teacher's guide is also available. Among the addicts who appeared in this documentary, some were able to break away from their drug dependence and rehabilitate themselves, and that result adds all the more to the educational significance of this film.

Another example that addressed the drug problem and had a strong impact on participants was an e-learning application entered in 2010 called "Aftermath." This application was produced by Zone4 Digital Media, a digital production company in Australia, for Queensland Health. It was developed after reviewing a past campaign intended to eradicate drug use that had ended unsuccessfully, and is notable for its effort to find an attractive learning tool for young people.

"Aftermath" is an interactive narrative that places the user in everyday situations where illicit drugs may be offered, such as at a music festival, in a club, at a party, and in the workplace. The story begins with the user being offered drugs from a variety of people, and then follows the different paths that result depending on how the user responds (yes/no) to each offer; it also looks at the multiple consequences of the choices made. Instead of one-sided instruction, the application is creatively programmed to produce an educational effect by providing users with choices and the freedom to think and decide for themselves. "Aftermath" has been released across Queensland on touch-screen kiosks that have been placed at major universities and colleges.

### ***Developments in HIV/AIDS education programs***

Since the mid-1990s, an increasing number of entries to the JAPAN PRIZE have focused on HIV/AIDS education. In 2005, programs from African countries, where policies call for the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS education in schools and communities, gained attention. "Talk Back on HIV/Aids" by Botswana Television is one such example that is accompanied by sign language and printed educational materials.

"Takalani Sesame Presents: Talk to Me . . ." (the 2005 Best Program in the Issues in Education category) is a program that was produced as a part of an educational campaign in South Africa aimed at encouraging people to talk about HIV/AIDS in both the community and the household. The program involves VTR coverage of three families and a studio discussion between the families and professionals. The goal is to

discuss how to confront the problem and stimulate thought on the matter. “Talk to Me . . .” was broadcast as a special feature of a popular TV series, “Takalani Sesame,” which started in 2000 as a South African version of “Sesame Street” with special emphasis on the HIV/AIDS curriculum. One of the main characters of the series is a five-year old, HIV-positive girl muppet, and the series attempts to spread proper knowledge about this crucial social issue among children at an early stage of education. Research showed that those who have seen even a part of this TV program were more than twice as likely to talk with children about this topic in their households.

### *Insights from within on the world of hearing disabilities*

Many excellent programs addressing hearing disabilities have been entered to the JAPAN PRIZE from early in its history; the 2001 Grand Prix Japan Prize winner, “Sound and Fury” (entered by Public Policy Productions & Aronson Film Associates, United States), is one such program that particularly impressed me.

The possibility of restoring hearing in deaf people using cochlear implants has been increasing. This documentary program shows two couples who have young deaf children and their struggle with the difficult decision of whether to give their children the implants or to allow them to grow up as they are. Both parents of one of the children are deaf and they take pride in deaf culture and their independence from the hearing world, but their five-year old daughter has taken an interest in the world of sound and wants to have the implants. The parents feel that she should develop her signing communication ability within deaf society and establish her identity as a deaf person. Then they discover a community where deaf people are accepted, and decide to move there. As a result of the move, their daughter decides not to have an implant. The other couple chooses to have their infant son receive the implants. The wife was raised by deaf parents and respects deaf culture, but she and her husband come to the conclusion that having the implants would offer their son the best chance for a successful future.

This program shows the complexity of the clashes of perspective and the internal conflict experienced by the couples as they made their decisions. It beautifully captures a discussion among ten or so people speaking solely in sign language. By dramatically portraying the clashing views on cochlear implants, the program presents a thought-provoking and emotionally charged examination of family, identity, disability, children’s rights and the preservation of a minority culture—the culture of deafness. “Sound and Fury” provides a rare insight into the world of the hearing-impaired not easy to access for most hearing people. Viewers will experience one of the important effects of educational programming: the progressive re-examination of one’s own

attitudes.

### ***The personal expression of artists with Down syndrome***

“Tying Your Own Shoes” by Canada’s NFB was selected as the 2010 Best Work in the Welfare Education category. It is a documentary featuring animations created by four adults (ages 22 to 41) with Down syndrome. By combining interviews with each artist’s beautiful self portrait and personal narration, the film provides a unique view into the world of Down syndrome experienced from the inside, as well as an intimate glimpse into the exceptional mindsets and emotional lives of these individuals. It is an effective way for students and teachers to explore disability, art and identity, self expression, and the nature of discrimination with a view to opening our minds to understanding what it means to be different in society.

Though programs on Down syndrome are not uncommon, the method used in this program to depict the world through the very eyes of those living with the condition appeals strongly to the viewer in gaining a proper understanding of such people. It allows the viewer to better understand disability, address diversity, and talk openly about ways to break down stereotypes about people with special needs.

The program director, Shira Avni, worked closely with each of the four subjects in the film to teach them how to produce their own personal animation stories for this production. Their efforts have proved successful in demonstrating the power of storytelling through personally produced art, giving each of the subjects in the film a means of self expression. The target audience covers a wide spectrum, from children ages eight and over, people requiring special care, parents and teachers, to people working in the field of special needs.

### ***Programs and websites created by the disabled***

In addition to “Tying Your Own Shoes,” other programs and websites produced by disabled persons gained attention at JAPAN PRIZE 2010. “Shine On!: Barrier-free Variety Show,” a program produced by NHK, was developed in the hopes of breaking popular stereotypes of the disabled, including well-meaning preconceptions such as that the disabled are always striving to overcome difficult lives. The program gathered interest among participants due to its innovative idea of introducing the conditions, thoughts, and feelings encountered by the disabled in their daily lives using the format of a light-hearted variety show.

“Ouch!” by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a website in which everyone, including the editors and contributors, is disabled. Developed specifically for

a disabled audience, the website presents various kinds of information, interviews, images, message boards, and blogs, all of which promote independence, self esteem, belonging, and understanding. Just like the NHK “Shine On!” program, it looks at achievement and shares important experiences with humor and creativity. “Ouch!” is about lifestyles rather than lifeskills, making it very different from most websites for the disabled.

## **2. Looking into the Realities of the Past**

### ***More on the topic of war***

One of the features of the JAPAN PRIZE 2010 was the large number of programs, websites, and educational games treating the theme of World War II. Behind this trend is the diminishing number of those who directly experienced World War II.

A TV program that particularly caught my attention was “Busting the Berlin Wall” (Special Prize, 2010) by Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) of Germany. This historical documentary was highly praised due to its unique approach to the “Wall”; the documentary explored various examples of the extraordinary methods by which people escaped from East to West, using advanced computer-generated images and testimonies from actual escapees.

Among websites, “Apocalypse” by France Televisions gathered notice. A companion to a successful TV series, the website is intended to provide viewers with the opportunity to learn about the second world war that involved so many countries, and displays an easily navigated timeline that depicts where and when certain events occurred. With releases of previously undisclosed photos of the war in addition to already published videos, viewers are able to learn about the war as though they are watching a documentary film.

“Lesson Starters: The Holocaust” by Teachers TV of the United Kingdom is an 18-minute program telling the story of the Holocaust aimed at children ages 11 to 16. It is composed of 6 short films that include the testimonies of a Jewish family in the 1930s, the moving story concerning an accordion that was played for friends being sent to the gas chambers, and the story of a Jewish person who survived by hiding in the central part of Berlin for three years. This production can be downloaded at the Teachers TV website ([see section 8 below, on Teachers TV](#)).

### ***Reflecting on the true nature of war through TV and games***

“13 at War/13 in de oorlog” by the Nederlandse Programme Stichting (NPS), a public

broadcasting organization in the Netherlands, is one of the other entries that claimed my attention, not just within its category but in the JAPAN PRIZE 2010 as a whole. NPS was interested in developing cross-media educational material on World War II for children and the “13 at war/13 in de oorlog” successfully combines the strengths of television in “narrative” and the strengths of the Internet in interactivity, aiming to evoke critical thinking about the war among children ages 8 to 13.

The 13-episode television series guides children to reflect upon the meaning of warfare by depicting World War II through the eyes of children, incorporating a drama in which a different child plays the lead role in each episode, visual records from the time of the war, and a historical commentary report presented by a girl reporter visiting various war monuments. The first episode of the program that was entered in the JAPAN PRIZE is called “The City Engulfed by Flames”; the lead role is a ten-year old boy living in Rotterdam. The story depicts his city being bombed by German forces and burning to the ground, during which the boy’s mother is killed.

The interactive role-playing game linked to this program begins with the surrender of the Netherlands. The plot centers on the search for the player’s missing father, and the player encounters various challenges. Difficult decisions must be made such as whether to help search for a hideout for a Jewish person and whether or not to risk the player’s own life. The game not only explains the historical course of warfare in a simplified manner, it encourages children to think about what kind of actions humans take when faced with the realities of war. In this way, the game tells the children that war cannot simply be labeled as black or white.

Besides the TV program and game, magazines and books, as well as teaching resource packages are available. Six episodes out of the thirteen are intended for incorporation into school curriculums, and on-demand viewing is provided via a school broadcast website.

### ***Regional history based on citizen made films***

These days the use of visual records from a region’s past for educational purposes is no longer unusual. “My Memory’s on a Roll/J’ai la mémoire qui tourne” (entered by Turbulent – La Ruelle, Canada), an audiovisual collection site built with 10,000 short family films shot by amateurs all over Quebec, gathered widespread interest among the participants in JAPAN PRIZE 2010. This site was made possible by collaboration between the cable channel Historia TV and a team of researchers. The site introduces the daily life of ordinary citizens between the 1920s and 1980s and can be considered a unique, social and anthropological portrait of the cultures and traditions of Quebec.



The collected footage is divided into eight themes including transportation, labor, media, and human rights. This website is prepared in accordance with the curriculum guidelines of the Education Ministry of Quebec with the aim of shedding light on the past in order to better reflect on the present and future. The site allows a wide range of students, from elementary to college, to learn about their region's politics, society, environment and culture from various viewpoints. The core of this website is its immense visual databank and its efficient tagging and annotation system. Teachers in a variety of subjects, such as history, geography, sociology, civics, philosophy, chemistry, and technology, have expressed high expectations for the usefulness of this site.

### **3. Treating the Hearts and Minds of Children**

I would like to focus next on programs and websites that relate to the sources of serious emotional suffering among children. As bullying, discrimination, sex-related issues, child abuse, and other difficult-to-solve problems become ever graver, the role of television and other media gain greater influence. Programs with innovative perspectives on these issues are increasing in the JAPAN PRIZE, as well.

#### ***Changes in educational programs regarding bullying***

Educational programs taking up the topic of bullying have been produced worldwide since the 1990s. What was originally deemed a topic for middle school and high school students gradually began to gain attention as a theme for elementary students, and in the 1996 contest, the school broadcast program "Good Health: No Bullying Here" (Carlton Television, United Kingdom) targeting 7 to 11 year olds, received the Grand Prix Japan Prize. This well-performed drama program based on intensive research realistically portrays bullying at an elementary school. The program was highly appreciated because it brings to light insights about bullying from different perspectives (children, teachers, and parents) and stimulates discussion of bullying among all those involved.

"Watch: Bullying," the BBC school broadcast program that was entered in the 2002 contest, targets the even younger age group of five to seven. A notable characteristic of this program is its focus on provoking positive thinking, such as how to create an environment in which everyone is happy, and just not on exposing acts of bullying. The BBC also later produced a school broadcast series called "Emotional Literacy" for lower grades in elementary schools and for teacher training. The episode on the theme of "anger," entered to the JAPAN PRIZE 2005, dealt with ways to foster the ability to create healthy human and social relations through appropriate responses to various

kinds of emotions.

### ***A unique program of stories with two endings***

“Being Friends,” a 2010 entry in the contest produced by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR), is a school broadcast series (10 minutes x 8 programs) targeting the lower grades of elementary school. The goal of this series, which is based on dramas dealing with children’s daily lives, is to preempt harassment and bullying among children by provoking discussion in classes about the right to be the person you are and the obligation to respect people, regardless of their looks, background, and personality. By so doing, the hope is to create a comfortable school life for these students.

The program entered in the JAPAN PRIZE 2010 was about “being made an outcast by friends.” Aida, a second-grade girl, is depressed because she is being given the cold shoulder by her close friend Marissa. This is because Marissa looks up to the popular girl of the class, Agnes, who dislikes Aida. Aida is the only one not invited to a party hosted by Agnes, and the story ends as Aida hides in the bathroom, crying. However, there is another ending to the story. The alternate story backtracks in the drama and moves toward a different ending, showing how the outcome would have differed had certain actions been different. By showing both a sad and happy ending, the program teaches children that it can take only a little bit of courage to turn a situation into something positive for everyone.

Each of the eight episodes has such a double ending, and the significance of the program is that, rather than providing immediate answers, it provides both children and teachers the opportunity for introspection.

### ***Appeal for understanding of Asperger’s syndrome***

The Best Program in the Youth Education category of the JAPAN PRIZE 2007 was “The Boy Inside” (MSK Productions, Canada). The main character is 12-year old Adam, a boy suffering from a form of autism called Asperger’s syndrome (ASD), and who is bullied at school and remains unable to join a circle of classmates. The program was produced by Adam’s mother, who sought to spread awareness and understanding of the increasing cases of Asperger’s syndrome affecting children throughout the world. She appears in person in the documentary and performs the role of narrator.

Viewers cannot help but be deeply moved by the producer’s commitment, made possible by the quite surprisingly open and honest portrayal of Adam and his family which shows clearly where the source of the problems lies. “The Boy Inside” was

highly commended as a program to help educators, parents, students with ASD, and their peers learn how to connect with one another and create a supportive learning environment that values diversity. After the broadcast, we learned that it had been revelatory not only for teachers and parents, but the boy who had been bullying Adam also admitted that he had changed his attitude in response to the program. “The Boy Inside” was released on VHS and was included on British Columbia’s list of recommended educational resources for teachers. The documentary received widespread recognition both within Canada and beyond as an educational resource that inspires acceptance of “differences” and mutual understanding.

### *Thinking about one’s own existence*

JAPAN PRIZE 2010 drew many entries that focused on the keyword “philosophy.”

“I Think, Therefore I Am, Part 2: Who Am I?” by the Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) is a school broadcast program for 8 to 12 year olds, and explores philosophical questions about life and self existence through the candor of children. The program involves visits to elementary schools in various regions of Finland, where children are asked questions without a clear-cut answer, such as: “What is the difference between something that is alive and something that is not alive?” “What is the difference between a human being and a robot?” “What would the world be like if everyone were the same?” and “What would the world be like if there was no such thing as death?” The children are asked to respond not only in words but by drawing pictures, as well.

In the 15-minute program the children’s pictures are animated and incorporated into the scenes as the children answer the questions, portraying their daily lives and thinking. The children respond with answers like “A robot can’t be bullied because it doesn’t understand that it’s being bullied. Humans can be bullied because they have a soul. They can get upset” and “If everyone was the same everyone would be friends because it’s easy to like yourself. But you wouldn’t recognize anyone. Everyone would look the same.” While introducing these responses, the program provides children with the opportunity to consider philosophical concepts such as “Life has meaning because there is death” and “You are aware of your own existence by encountering a variety of perspectives and recognizing the ‘differences’ among individuals.”

This is an educational program that not only aids in the development of the self-understanding that is important for mature growth, but that also fosters critical thinking, self-expression, and the ability to exchange opinions.

“Beyond Reason” (2010 entry by Arche Cultural, Brazil) is a clay animation program with no dialogue, which was designed to introduce Nietzsche’s philosophy on order and

instinct in Brazil's public schools, where philosophy will become a compulsory subject in 2012. "Beyond Reason" draws the interest of the children because of the attractive way it is produced, and it is designed as a program to be used in classrooms as an opportunity to philosophically examine everyday life and participate in discussion.

"Next Stop . . ." (entered in the 2008 and 2010 contests by Der Kinderkanal ARD/ZDF (KIKa) of Germany), targeting 10 to 15 year olds, was also created with the purpose of contemplating life, and provides a variety of perspectives on themes such as happiness, justice, and truth. The program focuses on two girls travelling by bus as they seek answers to questions like "Why do people die?" and "Why do I feel fear?" with inserts of advice from adults and proverbs by philosophers. The episode entered in 2010 centers on discovering what happiness is, citing Aristotle's famous words that, "Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." The program indicates that the definition of happiness differs from person to person.

#### ***Making adults think about child abuse***

The entries include programs that focus upon the problem of adults who harm children. "OPEN FRAME: That Year That Day" (Leoarts Communication, India) takes on the extremely serious topic of sexual abuse of children. This production was highly commended for explicitly addressing a difficult problem in a country that is not accustomed to talking openly about sex (2006 Best Program in the Issues in Education category). Six adults who were sexually abused as children are interviewed, and the program delves deeply into the nature of sexual assault and the effects upon the psychological development of people who were mistreated. "Open Frame: That Year That Day" is an impactful production that aims to stir awareness about child sexual abuse among adults and seek solutions.

#### **4. Enhancing Interest in Science**

The program that was the recipient of the 2010 Best Work in the Primary category (target age 6 to 12) was "Discover Science: Let's See the Speed of Sound," a coproduction by NHK, NHK Educational Corporation and the Al Jazeera Children's Channel. This program was highly rated for its method of presenting the depth and appeal of science in an easy-to-understand manner, exploring natural laws using one's own hands and eyes to perform large-scale experiments instead of relying on computer graphics and special effects.

A large number of science programs are always entered for the JAPAN PRIZE. In addition to content for school curricula, in recent years, these productions have increasingly focused on nurturing scientific thinking, relaying the important message that science is interesting.

Both “Scope” by the Network Ten of Australia (2008 Best Series Award), in which a scientist explains in an easily accessible fashion the mechanisms behind the science and technology in our surroundings, and “G Project,” a 2010 entry by Channel Encuentro of Argentina, in which a scientist and his assistants perform experiments and studies on various questions, are science series in which professional scientists successfully employ humor to attract children’s attention.

One of the strong points of German public broadcasters lies in their science programs, as shown in the many German award winners of the JAPAN PRIZES in the past. “Fantastic Phenomena,” produced by Sudwestrundfunk (SWR), is a 15-minute film series that combines computer graphics and live action to explore various scientific themes, and in 2005, the episode on the topic of “eyes” received the award for Best Program in the Youth Educational category. This episode draws viewers into the study of the mechanisms of vision by incorporating humor and fresh perspective, such as a sequence showing the movement of a fly swatter from a fly’s perspective.

Public broadcasting organizations in the United States also have intriguing features. “SciGirls,” a 2010 entry from Twin Cities Public Television (TPT), is a TV series that aims to increase interest in science, technology, and math among girls aged 8 to 13. The program is viewable online and emphasizes program-linked websites, such as through development of interactive games. Efforts are also being made in science education for young children, and a program called “Sid the Science Kid” by KCET Los Angeles is being broadcast. The website for this program received attention in the 2009 JAPAN PRIZE and includes games set in locations such as a school laboratory, a playground, and a kitchen. In this way, the developers sought to spark the curiosity of children by providing a scientific perspective into everyday events in a fun manner.

In addition to science, the cultivation of other basic education such as reading, writing, and arithmetic is an important goal throughout the world, including Japan. Since the beginning of the 2000s, these kinds of educational programs are often developed along with websites, allowing for repeated learning ([see Section 8](#)).

## **5. Responses to School Issues**

The breakdown of discipline in schools has received close attention in educational

programs since the 1990s. “Yizo Yizo” by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is a drama series that attempts to address crime and enhance the quality of education in schools and communities facing various kinds of social problems. The program left a strong impression for its dramatic approach to the various problems encountered by teachers and students in education, society, and ethics (2001 Best Program in the Issues in Education category).

The fact that teacher-student relations and classroom management have remained vital themes is illustrated by “S.O.S. Schule: Cry for Help from the Classroom” entered by the Germany’s Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen. This program vividly portrays problems that schools can no longer contain, and follows how one school reconstructed relations between teachers, parents, and students through the introduction of the “school coach” system (Special Prize, 2007).

In “The School,” a 2010 entry by the Radio Telefis Eireann (RTE) of Ireland, unmanned cameras were set up in various rooms of a high school and students provided with video cameras to take footage from their own perspective, in order to depict the daily routine at schools, as well as record the true thinking of students and teachers. By carefully portraying educational settings as they are, the production shed light on problems that are commonly encountered in schools around the world.

New types of educational resources utilizing websites are emerging. An innovative U.K. 2010 entry, “The Behaviour Challenge” by Teachers TV, is an outstanding example. This interactive video application offers teachers alternative teaching strategies and expert advice on how to deal with disruptive students in the classroom. In a simulated classroom a website posts videos of three types of trouble that can occur, and the user is asked to choose a course of action from a variety of options. The outcome of the event is depicted according to the response. Advice and analysis from behavioral scientists and other professionals are included, along with interviews with students on how they feel about the actions chosen by the user. Featuring interactive dialogue, this application has drawn attention for the support it can give to educational institutions having a hard time dealing with student behavioral problems due to the increase in teachers with little experience on their staff. Though originally produced as a program for secondary school education, a version for elementary school was later developed.

## **6. Diverse Developments for Teenagers**

The difficult task of attracting teens to TV, especially to programs with educational

content, has been a common challenge throughout the world for many years. However, innovative attempts have been made in recent years with the changing media environment.

### ***Regular programs with participation-style, cross-media innovations***

“Megafon,” the 2010 entry of Norway’s Norsk Rikskringkasting (NRK), is a weekly program targeting 10 to 12 year olds. It consists of documentaries centering on familiar problems and discussion among a group of four children as they watch a mini drama. The program urges children to confront and overcome various conflicts, and children are involved at every level of the production as individuals sharing real-life experiences in the documentary, reporters, TV show hosts, and performers. The discussions led by the children are accessible on the program website.

In the documentary corner of the entered episode, an 11 year old girl who finds out she has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is encouraged by her parents to explain her situation to her classmates and appeal for their understanding. The program follows the girl as she, with the help of her close friends, confronts her difficult condition and overcomes her fears and conflicts one by one. The mini drama corner features a situation in which an individual encounters a difficult choice and ends with a survey, asking viewers what they would do under the circumstances. The ending to the mini drama is shown in the succeeding episode and reflects the results of the survey, acting out different endings according to each type of response. In this way, the program incorporates interactivity with viewers. By telling real-life stories, “Megafon” aims to inspire other children to confront and solve challenges in their own lives.

Another program, “SpangaS” entered in 2010 by the Nederlandse Christelijke Radio Vereniging (NCRV), is a daily TV drama series targeting 9 to 15 year olds. In addition to the ten-minute programs, the series utilizes a diversity of media such as websites, social networks, Twitter, magazines, novels, and movies to portray the adolescent world. It takes up a great variety of themes, from religious differences and problems encountered in a multicultural society to personal problems such as experiencing the death of a friend. The interest of the children is aroused by the cross-media content, and the program seeks to communicate to them the importance of individual effort to learn how to confront societal problems and find solutions.

### ***Teen participation in program production spreading worldwide***

Participation of teenagers in program planning and reporting has been popular since the 1990s, especially in Europe and North America. The trend had begun to spread in 2000,

and two African programs entered in the 2010 JAPAN PRIZE proved that teenagers are taking an active part even in countries with a shorter history of broadcasting and educational program production.

The first of the two productions, “Involve Me” by Whiz Kids Workshop (WKW) of Ethiopia, was awarded a Special Prize. In the submitted episode of the program, a 14-year-old girl living in an institution for abused children takes up script-writing for the first time and introduces footage she filmed herself. In the film, she speaks out against child abuse and old customs such as parent-arranged marriages, and explains in her own words what she is doing to open up her future. The program aims to foster confidence among children and have them partake actively in society by showing that they are not the only ones encountering difficulties.

“Involve Me” had a considerable impact, with many children wanting to participate in the show, and many letters and phone calls received expressing young people’s hopes for active involvement in the media. This was a significant series for Ethiopia, and the first authentic youth-oriented program there.

The other African production is “What’s the Buzz?” by the Swaziland Television Authority (STVA), which received the Best Proposal award in the TV Proposal Division of the 2009 JAPAN PRIZE and was completed in 2010.<sup>4</sup>

The objectives of the production were to bring current news to teenagers who do not normally watch news in a way they could readily relate to, providing the opportunity for them to learn the importance of knowing about the world and communicating information. Both the reporters and announcers are teenagers. The experience was entirely new for all of the children taking part, and the TV studio provided training not only in the techniques of production but study sessions to help them master the basics of journalism. In this way, the studio is encouraging film production “developed by and for young people.” The themes of the program are diverse, from coverage of world cup soccer hosted by a neighboring country to serious problems within the country such as child abuse. A sign-language translator appears in the film for children with disabilities.

Notably, both the Ethiopian and Swaziland productions extend beyond simply “experiencing media production,” aspiring to aid the growth of teenagers as they face the realities of society and develop as future leaders.

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<sup>4</sup> See Note 1 regarding the TV Proposal Division. Coverage of the program production process was introduced in “Cutting Edge AV for Education” (broadcast October 30, 2010 on NHK Educational TV; September 26, 2010 on NHK World TV; November 1, 2010 on NHK World Premium, and November 3, 2010 on NHK BS1).



## **7. Diversity and Interactivity in Programs for Pre-school Children**

### ***2009 Grand Prix-winning preschool program: A new trend***

At the start of the JAPAN PRIZE in 1965, only a small number of countries, such as Japan, the United Kingdom, and Australia, regularly broadcast educational programs specifically targeting preschool children. Programs for young children in other parts of the world only became popular after the successful spread of “Sesame Street” (first broadcast in the United States in 1969) worldwide. “Sesame Street” was the first entry targeting young children to receive the Grand Prix Japan Prize (1971), and the next Grand Prix winner from this category was “Teletubbies” (BBC) in 1997.

The third Grand Prix winner was “What’s Your News?” in 2009, a TT Animation production from the United Kingdom, which was broadcast on Nick Jr. UK, the channel for young children. This news program shows events from the perspective of children. Children ages four to six undergo the important transition from an environment consisting only of family members to a world in which they must form relationships with people outside the family, and the program seeks to help ease the children’s acceptance of this development stage as they step out into the wider world.

Events often experienced by children (the disappearance of a pet, receiving new shoes, losing a tooth) are taken up as “news,” and an animated character reporter publicizes these occurrences in a lively report that is very much like a real news broadcast. The reporter visits the children who are the source of the news and creatively prompts the children to relay the news in their own words. The latest media techniques are incorporated into the program by cleverly composing animation and real-life images to produce the life-like performance of a reporter and a broadcast helicopter.

The program received praise for “taking advantage of the full potential of the media in order to respond to the true needs of the target audience and consider the most appropriate methods for learning.”

### ***Evolving websites for preschool children***

As observed with regard to many of the programs mentioned above, development of websites connected to broadcast programs has been remarkable. The BBC worked from early on to develop websites aimed at preschoolers as well as primary school children. “Zingzillas: The Big Coconut Adventure” is a website linked to a music program for preschool children launched in April 2010. The website allows users to get a real feel for what it is like to play instruments, compose as well as conduct music. The truly innovative aspect of the website is that, when the user chooses an instrument and

simulates playing, a web camera captures his or her movements and displays them on the screen, making it look as though the user is playing along with the four animated characters as part of the band.

The 2010 Best Work in the Pre-school category, “The Show with the Elephant” by Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) of Germany, is another successful example of a popular program linked to a website.

### ***Diversifying program content for preschool children***

Programs for preschool children are also gaining increasing attention from the viewpoint of content, such as the “news for preschool children.”

“Adrian,” a production by Katholieke Radio Omroep (KRO) of the Netherlands, focuses on the theme of the death of a pet. The program provides an opportunity for children to learn about these harsh yet unavoidable experiences through Adrian, a boy in the main character role whom children find it easy to relate to (2007 entry).

The German entry in 2010, “The Little Boy and the Beast” by the ZDF, is an animation that depicts with a gentle touch the distress of newly divorced parents through the eyes of a young boy. The realities and emotional turmoil experienced by children and the influence of such events on their development are depicted in detail. Some viewers held that the content was too difficult for young children to understand, but the production gave a strong impression as being educational and beneficial for children in a society where the divorce rate is high; the program allows children to reflect upon their own experiences after their parents’ divorce and develop empathy towards friends. It is an animation that is highly recommended for adults, as well.

Each of these programs was held in high regard for taking the stance that “it is essential to depict occurrences as real events that can happen in a child’s life, regardless of whether the content is something difficult or harsh.”

## **8. Developments in the New Media Environment**

### ***Diverse websites and games***

As introduced at the beginning, websites were added to the eligible entries of the JAPAN PRIZE with the start of the 21st century. In 2001, the JAPAN PRIZE’s Multimedia Competition was held (with the two categories of Web and Package), which evaluated the overall educational effects of combining educational/cultural TV programs with multimedia content such as Internet websites and CD-ROMs. The following year, a “Web Division” was established in addition to the existing “Program

Division.”

This new division was created for Internet websites demonstrating an overall educational effect in combination with programs. Since then, various types of websites have been entered in the Contest. Some examples include “Antarctica” (2003 Best Web Prize), the website of a NHK school broadcast program on environmental issues aimed at elementary school children; “Cyberchase Online” (2004 Best Web Prize), an elementary school math series website entered by Thirteen WNET of the United States, which was recognized for its efforts in constructing an irresistible site that children were found to repeatedly visit and learn from; and “A Place of Our Own/Los Niños en Su Casa” (2006 Best Web Prize) by KCET Los Angeles of the United States, a website in both English and Spanish that was developed for people involved in the care of children up to age 5. Another website that left a lasting impression was “Draw me a Story,” a 2009 entry by Televisio de Catalunya (TVC), in which children use drawings and paintings to re-create over a hundred stories from all around the world. Each of these websites was created to accompany educational TV series.

The year 2008 was the first year that the JAPAN PRIZE judged interactive contents such as websites and educational games together with TV programs, and in this year, the Best Work in the Primary category was a website called “Anash Interactive” by Reel Girls Media (RGM) of Canada, which introduces site users to the culture and traditions of Canada’s native people. The site is linked to a TV program, but is in fact educationally effective in and of itself. Users are able to use program characters and clip art to create an original story, which they can then publicize on the site and engage in interaction with other users regarding such original stories.

In the 2009 JAPAN PRIZE, an educational game with no links to broadcast programs received the Best Work in the Continuing Education category for the first time. Ranj Serious Games of the Netherlands, one of the most advanced countries in this field, was the producer of the site, “Sharkworld,” an online simulation game on the theme of business management.

The number of educational games and other interactive media is still small, but JAPAN PRIZE entries of such content is gradually increasing.

### ***Development of educational portal sites***

Recently, an important characteristic of websites is that, in addition to sites linked to individual programs, some provide an overall entrance to linked sites (for example, portal sites for school broadcasts, teachers, and welfare education). A leading example of a portal site is “Teachers TV” of the United Kingdom, an entry for the 2007 Best Web

Prize. Teachers TV was launched in February 2005 as a free-of-charge service providing access to digital broadcasts and websites, with the aim of improving the quality of overall education within the United Kingdom by developing both the professionalism and expertise of those involved in school education. While the portal started under the leadership of the Department of the Education, planning and production have been carried out by an organization that is completely independent from the government.

The TV productions cover all aspects of education, such as programs providing an opportunity to view the classrooms of other teachers (which can be an important self-development resource for teachers), programs to discuss educational issues in the United Kingdom, programs introducing school education in the different environments of other countries, and programs to be utilized as teaching resources on various subjects. Over 3,500 programs have been made available for viewing on the website, and users are able to pull up related reference information as well. The site also has an online community where interaction among teachers is frequent, and participation from overseas has made the website an international gathering place. The whole idea of Teachers TV, which specializes exclusively in school education, has influenced Finland, the Netherlands, and other countries.

Then, beginning at the end of August 2010, in response to the overwhelming popularity of the website, Teachers TV became an exclusively online service, allowing users to download and access the content at any time. In April 2011, however, Teachers TV was closed as a result of the cancellation of the contract by the U.K. Department of Education. As of July, the 3,500 15-minute programs in the archive are again available to stream free-of-charge through the websites of distributors including [www.teachersmedia.co.uk](http://www.teachersmedia.co.uk) (Teachers Media, a new professional development service brought by the team behind Teachers TV) and [www.tes.co.uk](http://www.tes.co.uk) (*Times Educational Supplement*, both offline and online news publication).

Since the Teachers TV educational service appeared for the first time during the 2000s, other portal sites have been launched by public service broadcasters with a history of services for school education. These broadcasters are pioneering new developments taking advantage of their strong audiovisual services, such as their program on-demand releases and video clip databank. Two such portal sites are:

- “Planet Schule (Planet School)” is a free-of-charge website created by the Sudwestrundfunk (SWR) of Germany. The site aims to provide new knowledge for students ranging from elementary to middle school. For each subject, videos are available according to the target age group (entered for both the 2007 and 2009

JAPAN PRIZE).

- “School TV Beeldbank (Schooltv-clipclusters)” is a free-of-charge website created by the Educational Broadcasting Corporation (TELEAC) of the Netherlands. The site provides a variety of high-quality video teaching resources, each about 4 minutes in length (entered for the 2009 JAPAN PRIZE).

In addition to the websites entered in the JAPAN PRIZE it may be helpful to note the development of the following education-related portal sites of public broadcasting organizations that were started earlier.<sup>5</sup>

- NHK Digital Curriculum was launched in 2001. The free-of-charge, overall website for NHK school broadcasts provides various learning resources that tie in with the content of school broadcasts. Using this service, teachers and students can view video content identical to that broadcast on this website, as well as view related still photos and video content summaries. The site also uses an audiovisual encyclopedia of short video clips in a series of classroom lessons (developed for use after viewing the TV programs). Students can also enjoy interactive activities (quizzes, games, etc.) and access learning supplements (glossaries, etc.) related to the programs. There is also a variety of information for teachers, including tips on using the program in the classroom, printable worksheets, and handy links to further information. In April 2011, the site was re-launched as “NHK for School,” which includes a variety of educational services for school education (<http://www.nhk.or.jp/school>).
- BBC Learning is the BBC’s overall education/learning website that presents educational material on a variety of subjects, such as preschool education, school education, foreign languages, and basic adult education (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningoverview>).
- PBS Teachers is a nationwide web destination composed of preschool and K-12 educational resources from the Public Broadcasting Service in the United States. It provides classroom materials for a wide range of subjects and grade levels, including lesson plans, teaching activities, on-demand video assets and interactive games (<http://www.pbs.org/teachers>).

### ***Programs and websites for media education***

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<sup>5</sup> See Kodaira 2009 and Watanabe and Kodaira 2011. Up-to-date information on the development and utilization of NHK’s school broadcast programs and related digital educational materials may be found in Watanabe and Kodaira 2011.

Rising interest in education/learning relating to the media has been evident in a number of ways in the trends seen in entries to the JAPAN PRIZE. The following examples are programs and content that dealt with widespread concern over the influence of the media.

- “Sexy Inc.: Our Children Under the Influence” is a National Film Board of Canada production centering on the theme of exposure to sexual references in various media. The program includes interviews with children, images of the problematic scenes, analysis by professionals, and examples of the educational projects being carried out. It presents detailed strategies for dealing with problems that many adults have not yet become aware of or are having trouble dealing with (Special Prize, 2008).
- “Rumor Buster” is a Taiwan Public Television Service Foundation (PTS) program that scientifically analyzes the credibility of information found on the Internet, and seeks to help young people develop the ability to properly evaluate information they find on the Internet (2008 entry).
- “Krimi.De: Chatwhispers” is a TV program for teenagers by Der Kinderkanal (KIKa) of Germany. Presenting the story of a crime involving a girl who fell in love through chat site, it reveals the dangers and fears that lurk within the world of the Internet (2009 entry).
- “Tackling Online Bullying” is an NHK educational program for use in the schools. Based on real-life situations, the mini dramas introduce specific strategies for solving the problems (2009 entry).
- “The Carnegie Cyber Academy Website” is a free website created by Carnegie Mellon University. Its engaging method shows children what they need to know and how to use that knowledge to protect themselves from online dangers. There are 27 games for 300 topics. The games may be downloaded as well. The site also provides information about Internet crime and bullying (2009 entry).
- “das.bloghaus.tv” is a drama series by Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR) of Germany about teenagers who follow blogs and social networks. “Mistaken Fame” (2010 entry) portrays the story of an individual who gained undeserved fame overnight after uploading an entry online with lyrics that were plagiarized from a friend. This story encourages viewers to respect the originality and individuality of others in a media environment where information spreads around the world in an instant and can have astonishing influence.

In addition, an increasing number of educational programs and other content are appearing intended to foster the ability to actively engage with the media (develop

media literacy).

In 2005, the Best Work in the Web category was “Garage about Films” (Garage om film) by the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company (UR) which provides young filmmakers with a platform to show their films. This website was highly praised for its timely characteristic of incorporating the progress of Internet culture with education while linking the site to broadcast programs.

The Finnish Broadcasting Company (YLE) has participated in every JAPAN PRIZE since receiving the Grand Prix (TV) in the first contest in 1965, and it has entered a number of programs that gained attention. Of these, the 2008 entry “Media Compass” (Mediakompassi), a website for media education, was of particular interest. The site allows for the study of media characteristics and information analysis and provides the opportunity to experience film production. The resources can also be selected at varying levels of difficulty for different grades, and information is provided for teachers and parents (also includes previews of film productions). The website is appropriate for studying within schools and in households.

The “Capturing Reality” website by the National Film Board of Canada (2010 entry) is the companion site to a film of the same name and consists of 38 movie directors expounding on their ideas about documentaries and over 160 clips from films. It is not a simple video database; the site allows users to learn about the process of documentary production starting with production planning, and refers to theories of journalism and how to evaluate information. The site provides the opportunity to learn about the media from the perspectives of both creators and receivers. There is also guidance on use of the site for school classrooms.

## **Summary**

The JAPAN PRIZES in the decade since 2000 reflected the rapid growth of the media and the world’s educational needs. The TV programs, websites, and educational games entered in the contest over those 10 years have included many with high educational value, those subtly-yet-effectively incorporating new technology, and those experimenting with novel methods of learning using cross-media features.

Many entries expand the world of learning by linking TV programs and websites, and others seek to advance learning by reconstructing the precious archives of the past in various forms.

Another feature increasingly observed is the enrichment of educational content through involvement of the learner in the process of program/content creation. The trend of users (learners and teachers) initiating the next level of learning while

revolutionizing the educational resources (User Generated Contents/User Generated Learning) continues to evolve; this tendency has the potential to further advance within the study of school subjects as well as the study of contemporary social issues.

In addition to teaching and learning that utilize media, awareness of the importance of studying the media has been gaining increasing attention in the JAPAN PRIZES of recent years.

Other content topics becoming increasingly popular delve into the fundamentals of human nature—life, death, the existence of the self—and themes exploring interaction among individuals. Many entries directed at different age brackets seek correct understanding and respect for various disabilities and “differences.” Programs and websites seeking to portray worlds that are often misunderstood by the public are sure to become widespread as individuals who have personally experienced alienation or discrimination are given opportunities to express themselves onscreen.

What are the characteristics of outstanding educational programs and content? While there is no single answer to this question, the discussion among the participants at the JAPAN PRIZES, as well as the entries that have been submitted, provide all sorts of clues. I hope this article will contribute to further research on educational media throughout the world.

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(The original Japanese article is available at

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