

Moving Forward While Preserving National Identity

Globalisation is a significant issue today. It can be defined as, "...social change, an increased connectivity among societies and their elements due to transculturation..."¹ Globalisation is a process currently existing in both Australia and Japan and, while it is important in maintaining up-to-date relations with other countries, it must not be allowed to take away from the traditions and rituals that define a nation and give its distinctive qualities.

Globalisation is a positive process that every country must enter into for the purpose of maintaining up-to-date relations with other countries so that society and the economy may move forward. By maintaining up-to-date relations, a country can benefit economically by means of foreign trade and investment and technological advances. Increased foreign trade and investment improves the import and export industries in different countries around the world. Keeping up-to-date with international technological advances and scientific discoveries allows a country to move forward in the development of its infrastructure in areas as communications and transportation. On a more social level, globalisation can result in barriers being broken down between different cultures to allow personal relationships and friendliness between races. This produces benefits for individuals, giving them a greater insight into other areas of the world and, perhaps, teaching them valuable qualities and lessons. Therefore, globalisation is important to the advancement of countries all around the world.

It is important that countries prioritise to secure and preserve up-to-date relations with other countries. A vital tool in ensuring this, particularly in Australia, is to generate a positive attitude towards and an interest in other nations and their societies. An effective path to achieving this lies in the education system. The youth of today are the leaders of the future; therefore, it is with them that a positive mind-set in which international relations are regarded as important needs to be created. The education system in both Australia and Japan should endeavour to offer a wide variety of languages and encourage students to embrace the opportunity of learning a second language. Learning another language gives one a greater appreciation of the fact that his or her first language is not known by everyone in the world. Many Australian

schools today do not highly value the learning of other languages or promote it among students. In Australia it seems there is an attitude among many that it is not necessary to learn another language, as many people all over the world are learning English. Learning another language opens up many doors of opportunity for a person's career and personal experiences. School exchange programs provide valuable experiences for students and also give young people the opportunity to be ambassadors for their country. For example, a Japanese student studying in Australia for a period would have the opportunity to learn about Australian history and values, while representing their country. Exchange programs consolidate the learning of other languages and result in experiences that are valued for life by the people who have undertaken them. An example of such a program is the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET). Its aim is to "...promote language education and regional internationalism by inviting foreign individuals to work in local government organisations throughout Japan".² It is programs such as this that allow individuals to create personal relationships with people from other countries and give them a desire to see relations between countries grow. It also gives the people involved a greater understanding and insight into other races' customs and values.

Local communities can also play a role in promoting international relations among citizens. Events such as multi-cultural days promote an appreciation for other cultures and provide a positive reminder that many different people inhabit the world. It generates an attitude of embracing other people and their cultures, an attitude that is much needed if countries are to create positive relations with each other. More specific ties can be formed between different cities in the world community by introducing a 'sister city' program. For example, the Redcliffe City's sister is Onoda City in Japan. The Redcliffe City Council declares that the aim of this program is to "extend the city's hand of friendship, encourage cultural, social and economic exchange between the cities, and provide an opportunity for greater understanding between different communities".³ This is a valuable program that is actively promoting friendly relations between cities from different parts of the world.

Countries can open up connections with other countries via import and export trade. For example, Australia has been a prominent supplier of beef to Japan for 40 years. Working together to achieve further advancement in technology and scientific discoveries should also open up connections between countries. The promotion of tourism plays a vital role in encouraging international relations by encouraging people from overseas to experience a different way of life. Tourists should be encouraged to become involved in as many things as possible while visiting another country, and be open to discovering that country's culture. Maintaining up-to-date relations between countries is important and can be achieved by promoting a good attitude towards other countries in communities all over the world, opening import/export connections, promoting tourism and working together to achieve mutual benefits in areas such as technology.

Despite the importance of achieving good international relations, it is vital that countries do not relinquish their individuality and traditions. Japan and Australia both have customs and ways of life that define them as individual nations. It is important not to lose sight of these things and to educate each generation in them so that they may take pride in their nationality. Again, an effective way to achieve this lies in the education system. Students in both Australia and Japan should be taught about their country's history, beginnings, customs and individual characteristics.

There should be days in which people celebrate the country they live in. For example, it is important that Australia continues to recognise and celebrate Australia Day and Anzac Day, and encourage young people to become involved and keep these days alive in years to come. Events such as the Royal Brisbane Exhibition, which began in 1875 as the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland and has become a tradition for many families, should also be kept alive. Japan has many traditional festivals and events such as Tanabata (in which people write wishes and hang them on a tree), Hinamatsuri (the doll festival) and Kodomonohi (children's day) should continue on as a celebration of Japan's rich culture. One of the biggest celebrations in Japan is Oshougatsu, that is, New Year celebrations. Events that have

traditionally been valued by Australia and Japan should be preserved and not left to fade away.

International events such as the Olympics generate patriotism, and allow countries to display what their most skilled athletes are capable of. It creates a sense of pride, as countries are able to display their best athletes. Large sporting events such as the Olympics also assist in bridging gaps between cultures. For example, in Japan Ian Thorpe, the Australian swimmer, is very popular, creating an interest in Australian sport. Sports such as kendo, karate, judo, sumo wrestling and baseball, that are traditionally very popular in Japan, should be promoted and encouraged. Sports such as swimming, that have brought great success to Australian athletes, should also be promoted. Sport can be very effective in creating patriotism and pride in one's country and, therefore, sports that are and have traditionally been popular in Japan and Australia should be continually developed.

Food and fashion are areas in which both Japan and Australia have individual characteristics. Japan is a relatively homogeneous country and statistics indicate that 98% of products in Japanese supermarkets are owned by Japan. Japan is recognised for its distinctively different food (that is, different from Western food) such as misoshiru (bean-paste soup), oocha (green tea), sake (rice wine) and sushi, among many things. It is important that even if Japanese people choose to purchase more Western food, that they do not lose sight of their distinctive food varieties. Japanese food has even been merging with Western food. For example, some Japanese sushi bars in Australia are producing sushi with more 'Western' fillings. This is an excellent way for Japan to merge with another culture while maintaining their own. A large part of Australian identity is multi-culturalism. Consequently, much of the food consumed by Australians has origins from all over the world. However, food such as damper, pavlova and vegemite that are distinctly Australian should not be forgotten. Japan has some unique, traditional fashion such as kimonos and yukatas. While Japan has embraced a lot of Western fashion, some Japanese women still wear kimonos on special occasions such as weddings and seijinshiki (coming of age ceremony). It is important that, while Western

fashions become popular in Japan, they still value their own traditional fashions by wearing them at important ceremonies and events.

Australia and Japan have various 'everyday' traditions. It is important that little traditions are not lost but continue to play a prominent part in Australian and Japanese life. For example, Japanese people use chopsticks and greet each other with a bow. Though these little things may seem insignificant, even small traditions help to define a country's national identity. Australians traditionally greet each other by shaking hands and value a weekend barbeque with friends and family. Japan has many traditional art forms and types of theatre, for example, shodoo (calligraphy), origami, ikebana (flower arranging) and kabuki theatre. In Australia it is usual for families and friends to exchange presents and have celebrations at Christmas time, while in Japan it is usual for parents to give their children otoshidama (money) at New Year's and to have gatherings on New Year's Eve, spending time for a few days with family and or close friends.

Globalisation is an issue that countries must contend with in this day and age. While it is important for nations to maintain good international relations with other nations by being open to their cultures, promoting tourism and by engaging in trade and encouraging technological relations with them, tradition and culture must not be lost. There are various means that can be undertaken to achieve this, as suggested, and governments should make it a priority to ensure this. Globalisation can be a positive process that countries undergo. However it should focus on moving forwards, while not leaving behind the past and present traditions and cultures that mould a country's national identity.

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