

# Management of “Ba” through the Educational Activities for the Union Members in JA

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In JA, the educational activities have already been obviously given an important position, and as its remarkable evidence, furthermore, here is a well-known saying as follows; “The cooperative-society activities are, that is to say, educational activities themselves”. However, those educational activities in many JA are not yet working efficiently enough and are generally no better than superficial ones. This paper takes up the Hadanoshi Agricultural Cooperative association, in order to consider the task for developing educational activities which are especially designed for JA.

For promoting the autonomy of the union members, we pointed out as following. It is essential for the executives and the staff members to do effective educational activities, which can motivate the union members for learning and make them take the initiative. In order to do so, it is also necessary for the executives and staff members to positively create the basis and the opportunities of “the emergence of germination”. Moreover it is also important for them to promote the union members’ informational interaction and, properly as a facilitator, to take over the helm of the Ba which promotes the union member’s autonomy so that they can develop not ordinary “controlling” but new “supportive” educational activities.

For the permanent development of JA, it is indispensable that the executives and staff members should place then educational activities into the first and most important position and furthermore to activate. In addition to that the executives and staff members need to renew their understanding of the fact that the union members are groups of diversities, so it is necessary to spread educational activities for the union members which can rouse the union members’ motivation for learning.

**Key words :** agricultural cooperatives, educational activities, Ba, autonomous members, facilitator

## 1. Introduction

In JA, it is definitely necessary not only for its members’ own benefits but also for their mutual profits to have education through the movement of the cooperative society. Moreover, in order to meet the economical, social and cultural demands of the members, it is fundamental for it to give a good education to its union members. The educational activities have already been obviously given an important position, and as its remarkable evidence, furthermore, here is a well-known saying as follows; “The cooperative-society activities are, that is to say, educational activities themselves”.

However, such educational activities in many JA are not yet working efficiently enough and are generally no better than superficial ones. It has been their

proposition for the union members to have a trinity character consisted of the shareholders, the managers and the users, and in addition, to pursue the union member-oriented educational activities. Notwithstanding, as Kitagawa pointed out, it has been focused only on a part of the leader-class members<sup>1)</sup>. And moreover, taking into consideration the fact that more union members are becoming indifferent to JA itself now, it is possible to say that JA’s educational activities for the union members are not yet fully developed.

Nowadays, there is especially a greater demand for the establishment of a highly organized system which

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Received October 1, 2005

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can correspond independently and functionally and can adapt quickly to this dramatically—changing social environment. In consequence, it is the most important task to activate the present educational activities as a driving force for today's JA, namely, for the integrated union of the members, to last and develop further. The subject of this paper is to consider the ideal way of JA's educational activities for the union member which aims to nurture more autonomous members, regarding it as a concept called "Ba" in Japanese. In this paper, I would like to refer to HADANOSHI agricultural cooperative association, JA HADANO for short, in order to ponder over the task for developing educational activities which are especially designed for JA.

## 2. Education for the Union Members in JA HADANO

### 1. *The Educational Project for the Union members*

In JA HADANO, the educational project for the union members has a long history. The Board of Directors' "107th Bill" on February 16, 1982 says as follows: "With today's rapid economic changes and diversification of the union members, those educational activities in the past will not be sufficient enough to solve the problems lying ahead any more. Considering the circumstances of JA managements which we expect to become severer in the future, it is obviously necessary to undertake education that ought to adapt to the new era." Thus, the importance of the educational project for the union members is referred in the 107th bill. In 1982, JA HADANO started to save a surplus of 20 million yen a year as "Special Reserved Fund of the Educational Activities for the Union Members", and this has come to 350 million yen in 17 years. Years after 1982, educational activities for the union members were started with a part of the Special Reserved Fund.

In the union member education project, as its leading parts there are three undertakings; a Co-operatives course, a workshop with an observation-cum-study, and a cultural lecture.

A Co-operatives course, aimed at cultivating talented people who are adapted to the time, consists of two lessons, which are each called 'union member's lesson' and 'a special course lesson'. The union member's lesson is held eight times a year with a capacity of 60 people. It is divided into two courses halfway; night courses to study tax, agricultural administration and law, or daytime course to learn about health, culture, and environment. In addition, observation-cum-studies related to each content are included in

these lessons. Also a certificate is given to the union member if he or she attends more than half of all the lessons. The curriculum is conferred beforehand at the committee which consists of the executives and the union members et al., and composed, based on their reflections of the previous year. The special course lesson is targeted to those applicants who have completed the union member course. Basically the applicants decide their own curriculum contents by the previous meeting and the executives and the staff members arrange and put them into effect. These contents are mostly the ones related to practical matters or topics concerning daily life.

Workshops are held in the organizational channel for fostering the leaders of the organization and activation of the organization. As well, the observation-cum-studies are implemented both in Japan and overseas. The domestic workshops inspect some excellent cases of cooperative society movement or JA projects. For the overseas trainings, in 1987 they organized agricultural inspection tours to Thailand, South Korea, China, and Taiwan for the purpose of gaining insights of symbiosis with Asia, and of Asian agriculture, JA and culture.

The cultural lectures have been given as citizen-participating style, opened to the union members as well as to the local community since 1993, holding up the following idea; "people would not gather around a place without culture". As their lecturers, famous people from the cultural field, and prominent persons from various sectors of the society are invited to HADANOSHI Bunkakaikan.

### 2. *Implementation of the System of the Co-operative Courses*

As I mentioned above, there are three projects for the union member education. In this article, I would like to focus on the Co-operatives courses as the main works of the union member education.

The Co-operatives courses are implemented from May to January. To collect their attendants, they put advertisements in the organization magazines from around March to April. As it has a capacity of 60 people, often it collects people up to nearly the maximum number without staff members' direct invitations. It is likely that in JA HADANO there is a certain ethos which appreciates the education for the union members more highly, which promotes such autonomous participations.

These curriculums are discussed and inspected by a committee including the executives, the productive cooperation members, the youth group, the women group, the academic experts, the city and the prefec-

ture employees. Moreover, they try to reflect the needs of the union members on the basis of the previous year's self-examination. However, they have already set up two courses mentioned above and the outline also has been decided with a tacit understanding and tends to be rather fixed ideas. Moreover, the curriculum cannot be said to be the one that can improve the motivation of those who take the course, mostly with lecture-oriented courses. The participation rate accordingly drops out 60 to 70 percent.

The special courses lessons are arranged for those applicants who have completed the union member course and they usually have 30 to 40 people present every time. From this we can also see that the organizational spirit to put higher value on union member education activity having a good effect. Moreover the fact is that there are more self-motivated participants taking these course lessons compared with the union member courses. As a result, the participation rate is high with about 80 percent.

The special course curriculum is drawn up basically at a prior meeting of the participants, and then the executives and the staff members arrange it afterwards. The lecturers are also selected by them. It has more practical contents mostly concerning the matters directly related to actual life such as laws and taxes. However, it has some restrictive aspects in spite of the fact that it was started by those union members wishing to study further about what they have learned in the former cooperative courses and in spite too of the fact that it is expected to have reflected the staff members' requests.

### 3. Giving the Union Members Incentives for Learning

#### 1. *The Educational Activities for the Union Members in lifelong learning society*

In accordance with a 1992 report by the Council on Lifelong Learning, now there is a certain demand for "Lifelong-learning society where people can freely choose their own opportunity to learn, and their fruits of their efforts will be appropriately evaluated by their society," mentioning that certainly there are two factors causing such demands in the modern society.

Firstly, people's demand for learning is becoming more enhanced, advanced in aged and diversified along with the maturation of the society. Secondly, it is getting harder and harder to correspond to this changing society only with existing knowledge and accordingly knowledge can easily become old-fashioned in this great change of the social environment resulting from globalization, IT development,

rapid progress in science technology and diversification of people's value sense, etc. It can be said that this is the same as "knowledge society" if it borrows the word of Drucler<sup>2)</sup>. That means, our society is now one where people are expected to give them chances for learning. In addition, it is supposed to create new knowledge and to have some chance to learn.

As Sakano pointed out that it has been recognized by educational officers of JA, how important it is to take the educational activities for the union members as lifelong-learning<sup>3)</sup>. And however in general it is possible to say that the union members tend to be passive because the initiative in the activities is usually taken by the executives and the staff members. In other words, their educational activities should be made more subjective and active for the union members since, in addition to that the educational activities having to be continuous they have to be able to nurture more self-oriented union members. Necessarily, it will be quite important to develop educational activities that rouse union members' motivation for learning more.

In this case, according to the Board of Directors in "107th Bill", it is necessary to carry out education that adapts to the new era. Moreover, since the professional training session has been implemented by the member's subjective and active approaches, consequently, it may safely be said that the educational activities for the union members are inherent in the significance of the life-long learning.

#### 2. *Importance of Motivation in Education for the Union Members*

People's willingness and initiative are called "motivation". The research on motivation has a lot of approaches mostly based on psychology and social psychology. In particular, there is the classical "theory of needs-hierarchy" by Abraham H. Maslow. According to his "theory of needs-hierarchy", people's desire can be categorized into five hierarchies from lower-level to higher-level<sup>4)</sup>. In the contemporary society, it is possible to say that people can easily satisfy their desire at lower-level and it seems that people tends to pursue their "self-actualization" at the higher-levels. As an evidence for such predispositions, a lot of people nowadays go to the culture centers or go to the seminars for their personal growth. On the contrary, these educational activities for the union members in JA are not yet established enough to lead the members to their achievement of "self-actualization." As the cause of this problem in JA, the following are conceivable.

Firstly, time, places and contents for union mem-

bers' learning are indeed restricted and therefore it is possible to say that their learning opportunities are not fully provided. Secondly, there are few systems established which can transform the members' various internal demands into actual learning activities. Thirdly, the fact is that the union member's internal demands, which can hardly be shown, are not adapted to the educational activities. As a result, it may safely be said that the union members' motivation is generally not strong enough.

Here I would like to discuss some issues concerning the members' motivations for learning. Motivations for learning, which are generally quoted, are divided into two types; extrinsic motivations and intrinsic motivations<sup>5)</sup>. Extrinsic motivations are the ones raised by external rewards and punishments. On the other hand, intrinsic motivations are not affected by those external rewards and punishments but depend on the process of learning activities.

Most of the union members' educational activities are meant to be conducted as their ways of learning since they have a lot of contents related to the practical topics on agricultural management or various matters on actual life. Moreover, there are many cases where the union members are participating in activities due to their connection with their executives, staff members or other union members and it appears that it has a compulsory shade of meaning. According to these present situations, educational activities which can strongly motivate the members by intrinsic factors are not yet well developed. However, due to Hayamizu's assertion, it has been recognized that extrinsic motivations and intrinsic motivations can form a continuum<sup>6)</sup>. Based on this, it is obvious that not only to develop educational activities pursued by intrinsic motivations but also to motivate the members by extrinsic factors is important for today's JA.

In this case, although the special training sessions have to some extent restrictions in the curriculums, the fact that they reflect somewhat the participating members' demands by taking the form of their previous meetings will be one of the factors motivating the members more strongly. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that there are few systems established that can transform the members' needs into their learning activities, the special training sessions have been actualized by their group atmosphere which emphasis on educating themselves and by the meetings of their committee members. This can be regarded as one of the motivating factors.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss how the

executives and the staff members should maintain the management of "Ba" in the educational activities in order to motivate the union members more strongly.

#### 4. Management of "Ba" for the Educational Activities for the Union Members

To quote Hiroyuki Itami, "Ba" is a "container for informational-interacting effect" which is meant to be an "outline of the situation in which people are participating, observing each other whether consciously or unconsciously, communicating, understanding mutually, encouraging each other, and sharing experiences"<sup>7)</sup>. Moreover, "management of Ba" is to try to manage the organization by means of producing and operating Ba in the organization. Moreover, "management of Ba" is to try to manage the organization by means of producing and operating Ba in the organization. Moreover, "management of Ba" can be divided into two methods following as "creating of Ba" and "management of process".

##### 1. Setting and Emergence of Ba

The process of creating Ba will be divided into two stages; the stage of germination and the stage of completion. In each stage, two cases will be considered; one is the case in which the management side makes the Ba heteronymous and the other is in which the members cause the emergence Ba autonomously. These cases can be combined and classified as Table 1 shows. The process in which Ba in the union members' seminars is produce and the special training sessions are produced is shown in Fig. 1.

In the case of union members' lessons, germination of Ba has been set by the way that the executives and the staff members clearly emphasize the importance of the educational project for the union members and then save a special reserve fund settled in "The 107th bill". Moreover, completion of Ba has been set by the leadership of the executive and the union members. Namely, it is a "Designed Ba". In the special course lessons, the emphasis on the union members' lessons and the organizational climate became the basis of emergence. Correspondingly in the committee meetings, complaints and demands as the union members are not satisfied with the present union members' lessons have caused the emergence of germination.

Table 1 Four types of Ba creation

|             |           | Complation  |                        |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------------------|
|             |           | Setting     | Emergence              |
| Germination | Setting   | Designed Ba | Flowering Ba           |
|             | Emergence | Promoted Ba | Spontaneous growing Ba |

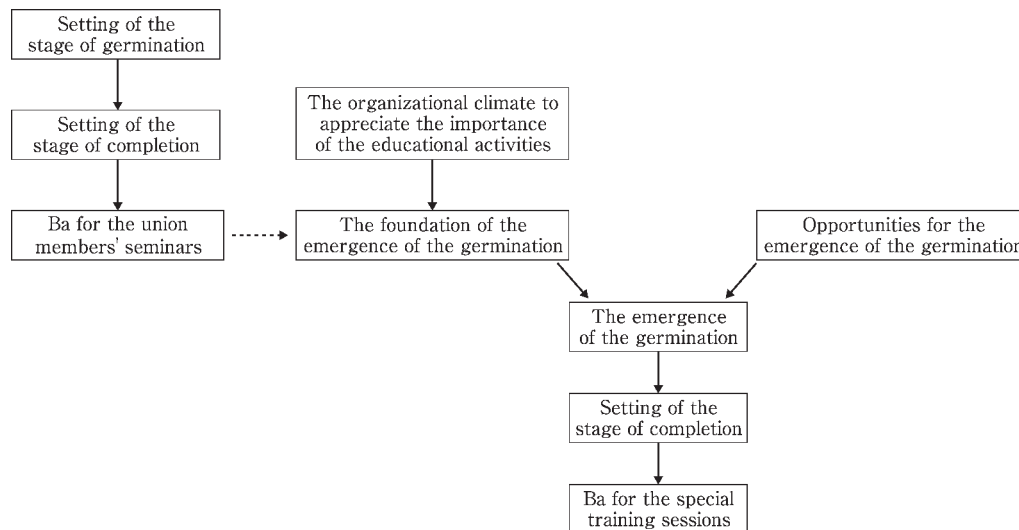


Fig. 1 Ba for the union members' and the special training sessions.

Finally after this the executives and the staff members have made plans for setting up the special course lessons, and, done the completion of Ba, that is to say, it is a “Promoted Ba”.

As Ba in education for the union members, the one with the elements in which the union members' intentions are more reflected motivates the union members more effectively and helps them to take the initiative more. This means that it is possible to state that those two Ba are desirable; one is a “Flowering Ba”, where the staff members set the “germination” by producing the opportunities, spaces and climates so that the union members can positively communicate and the other is a “Cultivated Ba”, where their intentions and demands cause the emergence of germination, create the Ba for their educational activities and then make it established by design. However, as to the “Spontaneous-growing Ba”, where both of the stages of germination and establishment appear emergently, it seems to be less possible that Ba will be produced without the staff members and it is also challenging to assume it realistically. Based on this, in order to cultivate Ba to raise the union members' motivations for learning, it is necessary to provide them with the environment to make it possible to have an intention of participating the informational interaction and to express their wills. Therefore, the staff members need to provide the foundation and the opportunity more positively so that their germination will emerge.

Besides, for meeting the union members' demands of learning and put them into practice, some intentional designing by the staff members will be important to some extent. It is also important to nurture an organizational climate which can instill the signifi-

cance of the education for the union members more than anything else, because it is the organizational climate that will make them determine the course tacitly and will produce a great deal of effect on their motivations for learning.

## 2. Steering of Ba

In the educational project for the union members of JA, as the situation now stands, mostly the staff members are making the settings of germination and establishment - Designed Ba, and even after that various things are controlled and developed by the staff members' leadership, and it is apparently notable that their projects are getting wrecked and rigid. This has caused the union members' autonomy to be suppressed. It also appears to me that it is probably the same situation in the present school education with various problems happening as a result of their uniform education emphasized on teaching one-sided knowledge, ignoring personality or individuality. Accordingly the executives and the staff members should place strong pressure on the union member so that they can fully take the initiatives and also that JA will function as the union members-oriented organizations. That is to say, it is necessary that they steer their Ba properly.

According to Itami, as basic managerial actions, “stimulation”, “orienting”, and “bundling” are fundamental. Correspondingly, giving shape to these three, he defined them as five steering steps; “stirring up (stimulation),” “picking up the snippet (stimulation and orienting),” “directing (orienting),” “making a flow (orienting and bundling),” “delivering a final blow (bundling)”. Viewed in this light, as for the management in the process of the educational project



for the union members, it is possible to make an assumption of several actions in the concrete as follows.

The first action is “stirring up” for breaking the current order and balance. By reviewing the traditional education for the union members, they can make a new foundation. In order to do so, they have to come out with a concept stating, “JA is the organization for learning” and raise the reforming of a modality of their traditional co-operative courses. By means of this, they can agitate the fixed ideas developed inside the union members and tacitly remove the frames which tacitly preceded.

Next operation is “picking up the snippets” and namely to chose only the worthy opinions among the union members in the new foundations. The executives and the staff members ought to pick out valuable comments or suggestions either in the formal meetings such as the ordinary general meetings or the round-table talks or the informal opportunities in which the union members communicate with each other as well as the meetings of the committee members or the previous year’s reflections. Then, it is also important for them to indicate which directions JA should take to the union members. Besides, it will be another fundamental for the staffs to find out the union members’ latent demands not yet shown by enforcing attitude surveys or the hearing surveys through personal visitation.

Correspondingly, the staff members need to “direct” so as to show a certain directionality after tying together the snippets which they have picked up. It will be possible to clarify their targets and visions of the educational activities by organizing the union members’ opinions and desires. With the specification of these, it is inevitably conceivable to give the members more consent upon the activities.

Furthermore, as the fourth stage, it is also important for the staff to “making a flow” for leading the union member to the same direction. In other words, the executives and the staff members should make an environment where the union members can stimulate each other. Therefore, they should keep sending information so that the union members can mutually share the recognition through the various opportunities such as their events or businesses and the public relations. Moreover, it is possible to make their spontaneous motivation rise and extrinsic motivations switchover by getting their family, other union members and local residents involved.

The final stage is to “deliver a final blow” so that the staff can make sure that a certain system is put in

order and can be translated into action. By breaking off the past argument, the members can ascertain the integrated system and make it clear to carry out the educational activities.

As I have said above, the executives and the staff members have to take over the helm of the Ba, which can promote the union member’s informational interaction and nurture their autonomy. In consequence, it is necessary to obtain a concept of “facilitation” which should differ from the traditional concept of “leadership”.

To quote Kimitoshi Hori, “Facilitation” is “an action which supports and promotes all knowledge-creating activities”, and it is the “Facilitator” who takes on a role of this<sup>8)</sup>. Since the constituent members of the organization basically decide the intention and the facilitator exercises the initiative only in the process, the result is that the autonomy of the constituent members will be supposed to be raised. To come to the point, the executives and the staff members are requested to play the role as facilitator and to take over the helm of the Ba of the educational activities for the union members.

## 5. Conclusion

The theme of this paper is to consider the ideal way for educational activities for union members, which aim at promoting the autonomy of the union members with a concept of the Ba, referring to the case of JA HADANO. As a result, the following two features in the management of the Ba for the educational activities for the union members become clear.

First of all, it is essential for the executives and the staff members to do effective educational activities, which can motivate the union members towards learning and make them take the initiative. In order to do so, it is also necessary for the executives and staff members to positively create the basis and the opportunities of “the emergence of germination”. Moreover they should make an effort to penetrate the organizational climate to appreciate the importance of the educational activities for the union members. Second, it is also important for them to promote the union member’s informational interaction and, properly as a facilitator, to take over the helm of the Ba which promotes the union member’s autonomy so that they can develop not the ordinary “controlling” but the new “supportive” educational activities.

For the permanent development of JA, it is indispensable that the executives and staff members should place the educational activities into the first and most important position and furthermore to acti-

vate it. However, if the lead is taken only by the executive staff, it would not vitalize the organization. In addition to that the executives and staff members need to renew their understanding of the fact that the union members are groups of diversities, and it is necessary to spread the educational activities for the union members which can rouse the union member's motivation for learning.

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## JA における組合員教育活動の「場」のマネジメント

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JA においては、教育活動の重要性についてはかねてより明確に位置づけられており、これは「協同組合運動は教育運動である」といわれていることがすべてを物語っている。しかし、全般的に見ると美辞麗句を連ねただけの空疎な状況となっている。本稿では、JA が実施している組合員教育を「場」という概念でとらえ、秦野市農業協同組合（以下、JA はだのと略す）の事例を参考に、JA に求められる組合員教育活動のあり方について考察した。

自律的組合員の育成を目指すには、組合員の学習意欲を喚起し、イニシアティブを発揮できるような組合員教育活動にすることを指摘した。そのためには、積極的に萌芽の創発の基盤ときっかけづくりを行っていく必要がある。また、役職員はファシリテーターとして適切なかじ取りを行い、組合員の情報的相互作用を促進し、自律性が育まれように、「管理」型から「支援」型の組合員教育を展開することを指摘した。

JA が永続・発展していくためには、組合員教育を最重要活動として明確に位置づけ、活発化していかなければならない。役職員は組合員が多様な集団であるということを再認識したうえで、組合員の学習意欲を喚起する組合員教育活動を展開していく必要がある。

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