ECONOMIC FREEDOM NETWORK ASIA

Friedrich Naumann FOUNDATION FOR FREEDOM

JEJU FORUM FOR PEACE & PROSPERITY

June 26-28, 2018
Jeju, Korea

JEJU FORUM FOR PEACE & PROSPERITY 2018

Reengineering Peace for Asia

아시아의 평화 재정립

Interview with Dr. Yong Suk Lee (Dr. Lee)
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by Armin Reinartz (Armin)
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Armin: I would very much like to use this opportunity having such a distinguished expert to ask some questions, from one father to another. Like many people in Germany, I don't really know what to make out of digitization when it comes to our children.

My son is three years old. He doesn't want to have yet a smart phone. Some people in Hong Kong, some friends say that's the age when they give their children smart phones. He also cannot cope yet. Is that a problem, in your opinion, if he wants to be ready for the world?

Dr. Lee: Three years old - I think you still have some time. There's no need to worry at this point, but I do think that there is a certain digital language that will be beneficial to young people, students, in the very near future.

The school my daughter goes to in Silicon Valley, they start computer teaching in middle school and, in some cases even earlier, but they have it in the regular curriculum in middle school. For instance, they would learn basic Photoshop and Illustrator, stuff like that as a mandatory. As they advance, they have the option to learn coding language, for instance, within middle school: HTML, CSS… Python, and there's an abundance of coding summer programs around the area. So it seems like people are exposed to this idea. Some people tend to get worried: "Well, okay, how much do I need to provide this? Do I want to think about this as a career for my children?" I don't think it's necessarily the case because it's more of a language that they need to learn. A second language like German, for instance. In the future, they will think of this as a language that enriches their thought process, and think about making stuff but that's related to the digital world.

Armin: So it's not just about becoming a programmer later but really as a basic thing to be ready for digitization.

Dr. Lee: That's right. I think what we see often is that those who have been successful in the past decades or so, in many of these tech worlds, started coding

very early. It's not that they use this code as a skill for their careers and focus on that. There are a bunch of coders… but the real innovators and entrepreneurs have this at the basis. They created programs and codes at a very early age, but then now they think about real world issues. Social problems. That's how Facebook was created. They wanted to do something different. But when they have an idea, they can easily implement that and experiment that with their skills.

I think that in that regard, it's not that different from mathematical skills or science skills in the sense that as a scientist or mathematician, they have something in mind, they have the tools already and they want to explore their idea using the tool. So it's a basic tool like language. And if you think of it that way, I think it makes sense to maybe start already. At least expose the children to it.

Armin: So if I understood you correctly, you're tying it directly to entrepreneurship?

Dr. Lee: Yes. That is right. I think it's quite relevant. Being in Silicon Valley, I think it's tied to entrepreneurship because some of these kids, they take these courses and they think about business models at a very early age. They have their own club in high school, thinking about social issues. It could be very diverse. Some kids focus on business-minded issues, but also humanitarian, social issues that can actually utilize coding skills in that regard. So I think it's related to entrepreneurship in the traditional sense, but also to social entrepreneurship as well. I think that's the difference. One can learn coding later in life and become a coder as a career, but that might not be as exciting as being able to use code to do other stuff.

Armin: Having these basic skills set and a kind of entrepreneurial mindset to have solutions…

Dr. Lee: Yes. That's right. Computer Science is the most popular major in Stanford. There are many Computer Science majors. The university is actually trying to be more humanitarian. These Computer Science majors are exposed not just to coding but aspects of history, or with literature that can enrich how they think about what's happening around the world. So the technical aspect is important, but we're trying to enrich individuals to think outside of that actual framework. It's what the university is trying to focus on as well.

Armin: We have that in Silicon Valley. If I want to send my son to a school or a place where these things are considered seriously, are there also other places in the world that are doing rather well, or have existing models?

Dr. Lee: Even within Silicon Valley, I think education innovation seems very marginal. There's the pre-existing curriculum and adding one involves a lot of bureaucracy. Some people have more innovative ideas to create AI schools, for instance. Silicon Valley wanted to create an AI school so that they can actually device their own curriculum and think about their own future would look like; simulate that, for instance. But I think within the traditional education framework, it's a bit difficult to actually branch out. The education system has been around for such a long time. I think it's at a very early stage. I think this issue will come up not just in Silicon Valley but other places, and there might be other places that are more innovative or risk-taking in its approach. We'll see.

Armin: Thank you very much for sharing your thoughts.

Dr. Lee: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you. Thank you.