

## THE TRUE AIM OF EDUCATION

In today's Japan, people tend to believe that education is all about developing academic ability, and what they call "academic ability" mostly refers to the ability to memorize and recall what adults call "right" answers. We should realize that this is simply the ability to "memorize" rather than to "think," and this kind of skill should not be called "academic ability."

I believe the true aim of education should be having children think for themselves from their own experiences and allowing them to act out of their own sense of responsibility. One important element to develop such an ability is to deepen their contact with nature; and through the accumulation of experiences in nature, children will: i) encounter strange and different things, ii) come face to face with unexpected things, and iii) realize that great things cannot be achieved just by one person alone.

Most of the problems we have on earth today seem to be deeply connected with urban expansion. Rapid urbanization is to blame for air pollution and the emission of carbon dioxide. Many people in cities are prone to utilitarianism and tend to become arrogant, thinking that human beings can do anything.

I wonder how we could forget the role of forests and farmlands. Isn't it time to remember and re-acknowledge the wisdom we have learned from nature? I believe it is time to escape from the utilitarianism of egoistic thinking and revive the compassionate mind to care for others. We must wake up from our arrogant belief that we can achieve anything with the power of science and technology.

For more than 90 years since its foundation, Jiyu Gakuen has pursued the same educational philosophy: "Daily life itself is education." Based on this Christian-based value, we see every hour of the day as being a learning opportunity, whether students are at their desks or not. And, educational opportunities can be found all over our 25-acre, lush green campus. For example, our students clean and keep up the campus by themselves. If our campus were surrounded by concrete buildings of the city, this kind of education would not be possible. From Kindergarten (Yoji Seikatsu-dan) and Elementary School (Shoto-bu) to the Junior and Senior High Schools, and all the way up to the College (Saiko Gakubu), all students in our school learn together on one campus. Thus, a uniquely integrated education is taking place here, providing ideal learning opportunities according to the different stages of child development.

At the College, which is the final stage of our education curriculum, students not only pursue their academic studies, but they also lead the same self-governing lives as the rest of the school. At the same time, to practice the words of Motoko Hani, our founder: "To be a school that lives, grows, and acts for the society," many students find themselves actively working in social contribution projects in local communities and developing areas both inside and outside of the country.

Jiyu Gakuen will continue to adhere to its philosophy: "Daily life itself is education." With our unique education system, we will keep fostering truly capable characters.



**ICHIOKA, YOICHIRO**  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Former Executive Editor in Chief of Nikkei, Inc., Yoichiro Ichioka has been in his current position since 2009. He is also a prolific author whose work is known under the pseudonym of Yo Mizuki. He graduated from Jiyu Gakuen College in 1960.