

West Meets East. A Well-Rounded Education versus an Angular Education in Japan

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Abstract: The idea of a well-rounded education is widely recognized, and as IB programs and the concept of an IB education are gradually yet steadily infiltrating the Japanese education system, Japan can no longer ignore the existence of a *Zenjin* («whole person») education, which was first practiced in 1921 by a Japanese philosopher of education named Kuniyoshi Obara. This paper compares the philosophical and theoretical foundations of Obara's *Zenjin* education and a so-called «well-rounded» education, revealing the similarities between them and using these as a rationale for educational reform in Japan. In the literature review, the recent debate between well-rounded and angular education proponents is addressed, and it is concluded that a well-rounded education still has a role to play, even though there are a certain number of competitive and prestigious universities/colleges that question its merits and give priority to high school graduates who have specialized solely in one area, such as sports, arts, or a standard-deviation-value-oriented, angular education. Regardless of the fact that attaining good scores on academic tests is often thought to be a reasonable way for children to meet their aspirations and expectations and receive benefits from a meritocracy and an academic hierarchy, especially in Japan, this paper insists that a true form of education should be concerned with each individual's whole personality, and therefore a *Zenjin*, or well-rounded, education must play a core role in the education system. Indeed, the current Japanese education system is collapsing and deteriorating, exposing children to serious problems such as bullying, school-related suicides, etc. so preventative measures urgently need to be put in place, and it is time to think carefully about what a *Zenjin* education has to teach us.

Keywords: A well-rounded education; a liberal arts education; a *Zenjin* education; Kuniyoshi Obara; the Japanese education system.

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1. Introduction

It is in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough – it's technology married with liberal arts, married with humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing.

This is how Steve Jobs summarized his strategy when he introduced the iPad 2 in March 2011. A liberal arts curriculum has a long history. It dates back as far as the age of Greek philosophy. Although there are always debates among proponents and opponents of a liberal arts education, a large number of educational institutions in the world continuously offer students a liberal arts education. This is simply because the mission of liberal arts institutions is to «educate the whole person rather than training graduates to succeed at specific jobs that employers may be seeking to fill at a certain point in time» (Krislov, 2013), and they believe that students will benefit from studying the distinctive blend of the humanities, science, and the arts and be prepared to lead and flourish in meaningful and well-considered lives, including careers, and to become well-informed, engaged, and deeply committed citizens of their communities as well as the world. Especially in a rapidly and highly globalized economy, those students are powerful and remarkable assets.

So, how is the term «liberal arts» related to «well-rounded», which is used in the title of this paper? Those who have written on a liberal arts and/or a well-rounded education consider these two terms as synonyms. For example, Michael S. Roth, the president of Wesleyan University, used both synonymously in CNN's opinion section on May 21, 2013. He described Wesleyan University as a liberal arts college, but used the term «well-rounded» when explaining Wesleyan's education. Moreover, a well-rounded education derives from the ancient Greek notion, *enkyklios paideia*, which means education that «included the development of the mind, body, and spirit through the inclusion of diverse 21 disciplines like mathematics, rhetoric, music, and gymnastics» (Caton, 2012, pp. 20-21), and it is closely linked with the notion, *enkuklios paideia*, which is a root of a liberal arts (*septem artes liberales*) education (Bybee, 2004; Huang, 2009; Tachikawa, 2016). Therefore, in this paper, a liberal arts education and a well-rounded education are regarded as synonymous and compatible, but in order to unify the terminology throughout the document, a well-rounded education is used from this point on.

A well-rounded education is gradually spreading in the world. For instance, in the Every Student Succeeds Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in December 2015 to replace the No Child Left Behind Act, it is mentioned:

The term «well-rounded education» means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose

of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.

Another good example is found in Harvard College's website¹ especially prepared for prospective high school students:

A good high school education should do more than prepare you for the next level of education or for later employment – it should prepare you to take advantage of future learning opportunities of all kinds. You should gain particular skills and information, as well as a broad perspective on the world and its possibilities.

It is interesting that the notion of a well-rounded education can also be found in the literary world. It may seem to be out of the blue, but the Harry Potter series is one of the most widely recognized and prominent contemporary literary works in the world, and in common with many other countries, Japan has also produced many Potter fandoms. Quite few of them may have come to realize that a teacher at Hogwarts offers a well-rounded education. It is a very interesting and distinctive analysis when Nelson (2016, p. 4) pointed out that Lupin, the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, «gives hope to his students», «encourages and uplifts them» and «creates lessons that the students feel are relevant to their lives after Hogwarts which is essential to a well[-]rounded education».

Moreover, a well-rounded education plays a significant and core role in the progressively expanding and growing educational program called International Baccalaureate (IB). The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) implemented a well-rounded education in its educational programs – Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, Diploma Programme, and Career-Related Programme. According to the IBO (2013, p. 3), an IB education is «holistic in nature». That is, it is «concerned with the whole person», and «along with cognitive development, IB programmes address students' social, emotional and physical well-being». Moreover, in the IBO's official blog on October 3, 2014, Bernadel, the IB's university relations administrator, touched upon her experience at the National Association of College Admissions Counselors conference in 2014, mentioning that «many of the prestigious universities ... emphasized that the IB curriculum gives students a well-rounded liberal arts perspective which is highly sought after in the admissions process».

These are examples of how a well-rounded education is closely tied up with people's notion and image of an ideal education, but it is important to note that a well-rounded education itself is not fantastical and magical. Rather, it is highly pragmatic. In his speech at the Arts Education Partnership National Forum on April 9, 2010, Arne Duncan, the former U.S. Secretary of Education (2009-2015), remarked:

For decades, arts education has been treated as though it was the novice teacher at school, the last hired and first fired when times get tough. But

¹ For more information, see: <https://college.harvard.edu/admissions/preparing-college/>.

President Obama, the First Lady, and I reject the notion that the arts, history, foreign languages, geography, and civics are ornamental offerings that can or should be cut from schools during a fiscal crunch. The truth is that, in the information age, a well-rounded curriculum is not a luxury but a necessity.

And, he continued:

A well-educated student ... is exposed to a well-rounded curriculum. It is the making of connections, conveyed by a rich core curriculum, which ultimately empowers students to develop convictions and reach their full academic and social potential.

Before discussing a well-rounded education in Japan, in the next section, literatures on a well-rounded education and its actual benefits and outcomes are carefully reviewed.

2. The saga of a well-rounded education

Thys (2013) indicated that Sean Logan, who is the director of college counseling at Phillips Academy in Andover and who has worked in admissions at Williams and Occidental colleges as well as Harvard and Stanford universities, said:

... colleges place applications in buckets: well-rounded students, exceptionally talented athletes, musicians, actors, children of alumni and children of donors. And as the bucket available for well-rounded students has gotten smaller, the most selective colleges have looked for students who excel at something.

Although his report points out that well-rounded students are still being told that they are welcome, it warns those students not to get involved in too many activities. Most selective colleges in the U.S. seem to be shifting from «We want a kid who is so well-rounded they check off 25 boxes» to «We want to know what you're passionate about». That is, there are a certain number of people who believe that an angular education, which is to prod students into «narrower, more specialized professional education» (Hersh *et al.*, 2008, p. 3) where they can concentrate solely on their own interest, instead of granting leeway to them to be diverse in experience.

Moreover, Kleiman, an executive vice president of communications at SANDOW, cited an interview by Thomas L. Friedman in The New York Times with Laszlo Bock, the head of hiring at Google, introducing Bock's strong opinions on whether or not prospective employees really need to go to college and referencing his philosophy: «Those who choose to attend a university after high school should think long and hard about what they want to do for a living and select his or her major wisely, focusing on skills that will land them a job post-graduation» (Kleiman, 2014).

So, are angular students more welcome nowadays than those who are well-rounded? And, should students specialize instead of generalizing? John Taylor, the

associate head of school, the dean of faculty, and a language teacher at Deerfield Academy, once answered:

It's a question of degrees. We try to complement specialization with other things. If we have a student who only wants to do one sport or who loves being in a science club, we say to them, okay, but don't do it for three terms in a row. Try other things. It's not an either-or matter. It's more a matter of finding the and (Reade, 2013).

Kleiman (2014) also advised as follows:

Do what you love, study what interests you, get good internships, connect with as many people as possible who might help you land a job, be willing to work hard and be resourceful – and you'll be fine, whether or not you know how to build an app or program a computer.

Hersh (2009, p. 1) would agree with Taylor and Kleiman, asserting that «[a]t every grade level, K-12 as well as higher education, our students need a well-rounded education for a flat world». According to Hersh *et al.* (2008), Thomas L. Friedman, who created the metaphor of «a flat world», admitted that a well-rounded education is necessary because «it is a very horizontal form of education, connecting history, art, science, and politics» (p. 4).

From the viewpoint of educating and developing global lawyers, Wenzler & Kwietniewska (2012) offered a unique opinion on a well-rounded education. Leading law schools in Germany are facing a double challenge to combine core legal instruction, which maintains a high-level education in theory, history, and domestic law, and to prepare graduates for a more globalized business; as a consequence, students expect «a complete and well-rounded package» (p. 463). In their paper, Bucerius Law School was introduced as an institution with the philosophy «not only to offer future jurists a well-rounded education in legal matters, but to produce individuals with an in-depth understanding of the international legal, economic, and political contexts as well» (p. 464). They concluded:

[a] well-rounded, well-structured program designed exclusively for legal professionals is the niche that law schools can fill. This is a new market to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly influential group: lawyers who practice in an international legal environment (p. 467).

Or, in the regard to sustainable manufacturing education, Jawahir *et al.* (2013) pointed out that:

One of the major concerns with undergraduate education is the increased compartmentalization of disciplines, which in the end produces graduates who are unable to view problems from any perspective other than taught in their own disciplines. All sustainability problems, including those in sustainable manufacturing involve complex issues, particularly at the systems level, that

cannot be addressed by looking through the lens of one single discipline. Future engineers, scientists and managers must be taught skills and capabilities to view complex sustainability problems from different perspectives to enable robust solutions that are resilient to different externalities that may be encountered (p. 15).

And, they concluded that a broad and well-rounded education should be provided in order to change the traditional model for undergraduate education in engineering and manufacturing that has been «highly discipline-specific» (Jawahir *et al.*, 2013, p. 15). Similar argument was raised by Kornegay *et al.* (2014), asserting that «majorities of employers and recent college graduates believe that an undergraduate college education should provide a balance of a well-rounded education, knowledge, and skills in a specific field» (p. 3).

In reviewing literatures on a well-rounded education and its counterevidence, it is clear that a well-rounded education contributes to advancement of adaptability and response capability especially in an age of uncertainty when people live in an unpredictable world, where the present international situation is severely in danger and unstable, where the state of technology to develop artificial intelligence is unknown and may have already exceeded human assumptions, and where various types of disparities are found in both international and domestic societies. Physical and mental toughness and intelligence are necessary to live in today's intense knowledge-based society, and it is undoubtable and unquestionable that a well-rounded education is exactly what people who participate in education-related industries need.

3. Education in Japan

As IB programs are growing in number across the world, Japan has recently decided to swim with the current of the times. It started with the Council for Revitalization of Education's Third Proposal (May 28, 2013) and the Cabinet's adoption of the Japan Revitalization Strategy (June 14, 2013), which proclaimed that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) would increase the number of IB approved schools from 16 to 200 by 2018. The Japan Business Federation's proposal on June 13, 2014 also reemphasized the significance of the policy, but the Cabinet's adoption of the Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan on December 22, 2016 revised the policy to be achieved by 2020.

So, will or can Japanese education change? If so, how? These questions are critically important for those who are engaged in education. After a brief overview of the Japanese education system and the educational issues Japan currently faces – an examination hell and a standard-deviation-value-oriented education; an overemphasis on educational qualifications and academic background; and an educational gap – the abovementioned questions are discussed.

3.1. Overview of the Japanese education system

Thus there is a general belief that a student's performance in one crucial examination at about the age of 18 is likely to determine the rest of his life. In other words: the university entrance examination is the primary sorting device for careers in Japanese society. The result is not an aristocracy of birth, but a sort of degree-ocracy.

The OECD (1971, p. 89) submitted a report on the Japanese education system in *Reviews of National Policies for Education*. Bossy (2000) wrote his report from the field, where he closely examined academic pressures and their impact on Japanese students. He pointed out that excessive academic pressures (especially from fierce competition, high expectations, and the challenging curriculum) on students are multi-dimensional – psychological, emotional, intellectual, and physical – and become manifest in various ways such as school violence, juvenile delinquency, recurring bullying or school-related suicides, dropping out, withdrawal, classroom collapse, and various forms of psychosomatic syndromes.

So, what are the distinctive features of the Japanese education system? In the process of educational development, Japan built its system by modeling it after developed countries in the West and introducing elements of the school systems there. According to Ichikawa (1991), there are eight distinctive characteristics of the Japanese educational system: 1) schooling and school education dominate students' lives; 2) a well-developed private sector with a large share of private funding for education; 3) preference for general education under a single-track system; 4) automatic grade promotion based on school age; 5) highly exclusive for traditional-age students; 6) high average of educational achievement with relatively strong homogeneity; 7) an entrance examination system with a tinge of screening; and 8) autonomy in school management.

The following are general explanations for preschool, primary, (lower and upper) secondary, and tertiary (hereafter, higher) education. One thing they have in common is that the academic calendar (school year) begins in April and ends in March. According to the National Institute for Educational Policy Research², the Japanese preschool education system consists of two types of institutions: kindergartens (*yochien*) under the control of MEXT and nursery centers (*hoikujo*) under the jurisdiction of Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The Japanese primary education system is the first six years of compulsory education, and primary education takes the role of fundamental stage. At the primary school level, the age-grade system is adopted to enroll children according to their date of birth, and children enroll in primary school as first-graders on April 1, immediately after their sixth birthday. The age-grade system remains throughout the compulsory education period, so children are allowed neither to skip grades nor to repeat grades based on their academic performance. Moreover, children who take a long leave of absence due to sickness or other specific reasons are in principle able to return to a grade suitable to their age.

² See the link: <http://www.nier.go.jp/English/index.html/>

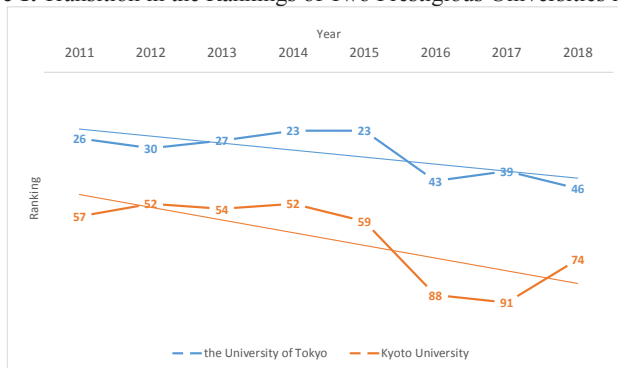
The second three years of compulsory education is for the Japanese lower secondary education system, with the «purpose of providing general education commensurate with children’s mental and physical developments on the basis of primary school education» (School Education Law, article 45). Similar to primary schools, students of lower secondary schools follow the same curricula under the Course of Study, regardless of where they live in Japan. In contrast, the role of the Japanese upper secondary education system is to «provide higher general education and specialized education according to students’ mental and physical development on the foundation of the lower secondary education» (School Education Law, article 50). It therefore is vital and crucial for upper secondary students because it determines those students’ future courses as well as distributing the future work force into society. Normally, students have to take entrance examinations to enter upper secondary schools. Once again, students there follow the Course of Study.

Finally, the Japanese higher education system may be considered as an example of diversification and massification in a highly industrialized country. It consists of various categories and types of institutions, differing in their missions, functions, academic standards, prestige, status, and financing methods. Japanese higher education is in a mature stage, but with the changing and rapidly globalizing environment, such as the declining birth rate and aging population and increasing international competition (briefly mentioned later), Japanese society confronts unprecedented trends which may have a major impact on its higher education system and affect the mode of operation.

3.2. Educational issues

Japanese universities/colleges have been struggling to strengthen their international presence, but unfortunately their challenges have been unsuccessful. For example, in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Japanese universities are always ranked lower than those in the U.S. and the U.K. Moreover, in recent years, while universities in Singapore (National University of Singapore) and China (Peking University and Tsinghua University) are steadily attaining higher rankings, two so-called best national Japanese universities – the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University – are retrograding (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Transition in the Rankings of Two Prestigious Universities in Japan



The causes of the current devastation and failure of education in Japan may converge on three educational issues mentioned above. An examination hell invoked with a standard-deviation-value-oriented education is a well-known phenomenon for Japanese parents and their children craving entry to a university/college with a long history, considerable prestige, high reputation, formidable competitiveness, and great advantages for finding a job with a typical major enterprise. To achieve their goal, parents (and their children) tend to choose a school based on how seriously they want the child to enroll in a specific university/college. Some very extreme parents send their children to a kindergarten that is recognized as a gateway to an elementary school specialized in preparing students to get into a popular combined junior high and high school focused on preparation for students to get into a deeply respected and authoritarian university/college.

Those schools are also highly ranked on a standard deviation value called *hensachi*, which is a numerical value that shows one's scholastic ability in comparison to that of other people; thus, it is very rigorous and insurmountable for average students to pass entrance examinations. This is how the examination hell is formed and deeply embedded in Japanese society. For people who have the strong faith that a standard deviation value is a reliable source of information for distinguishing competent people from incompetent ones cannot stop judging educational institutions according to their standard deviation values. To the extent that the majority of parents and children in Japan are still under the spell of the *hensachi* mythology, educational institutions continue to be evaluated based on standard deviation value rankings.

Along with this, Japanese society (including enterprises) has been affirming the existence of rankings of *hensachi* through the overemphasizing of educational qualifications and academic background (*gakureki*) and a social system of academic cliques (*gakubatsu*). A few years ago, a social phenomenon called a *gakureki* filter arose and caught on with the public. It is to filter senior students on the basis of the university/college they are enrolled in during their recruitment activities. Academic cliques indwell in major enterprises, and those with the authority to manage personnel affairs are favorable to graduates of their alma mater, so they preferentially hire those graduates as a consequence.

It is a meritocracy (or degree-ocracy as the OECD puts it) of the present day in which educational qualifications and academic background are still a significant factor to be successful and gain advantages (Cobb *et al.*, 2016). Even now, to attain a certain *gakureki* and belong to a particular *gakubatsu* in order to share in the benefit is an ultimate goal for typical young upwardly mobile individuals. And, to achieve this goal they have to prove that they are highly ranked on *hensachi* and obtain an express ticket bound for a successful career path.

One baneful influence of a meritocratic society is economic disparity where social stratification occurs as a consequence. Widening economic disparity also generates an educational gap between the haves and the have-nots. As already mentioned, several elaborate research efforts have revealed a strong correlation between academic achievement/opportunity and socio-economic status. The more a household has financial leeway, the more it can afford children's out-of-school activities, such as attending a cramming school or engaging a tutor.

As economic disparity continuously widens, the underclasses are allowed to have very limited choices for their children's education, unless otherwise offered, simply sending them to public school and taking some free lessons at a community center. The social marginalization of the underclasses thus far has ossified Japanese society, pretermittting maldistribution of wealth and resources and incorporating reproduction of poverty into the Japanese social system as if it were natural and reasonable. Some joke that it is a reoccurrence of the social class system of warriors, farmers, artisans, and tradesmen in the Edo period, and similar to the caste system in India.

3.3. *A remedy*

The first question asks if Japanese education is able to change, and the answer is that it is possible but may need a Copernican revolution in the educational ideology of the Japanese. In other words, considering an alternative notion of education is essential. The second question inquires as to an implementation method and process, and the answer is to return to the nature of education; that is, to get rid of current circumstances and the value system surrounding Japanese education in order to go back to basics, thinking of the true meaning of education, the real purpose of it, and the pure motivation for it. More specifically speaking, the Japanese as a whole have to confront a drastic paradigm shift from an inclination to evaluate people in terms of conspicuous yet superficial and biased information such as *hensachi*, *gakureki*, and/or occupation to a character evaluation which looks at the person as a whole.

In 2003, Margaret Hodge, the UK Minister for Universities, criticized higher education institutions for becoming manufacturers of «Mickey Mouse» degree courses, and accused those institutions for «dumbing down» students who would earn a degree by simply piling up numbers on Mickey Mouse courses. Hersh *et al.* (2008, p. 5) pointed out that dumbing down of K-12 education «have produced a generation of less resilient students who come to college unsure of who they are, fearful in their lack of identity, and with less confidence in the future». This diminished sense of self explains an increase in what Bossy (2000) listed out – school violence, juvenile delinquency, recurring bullying or school-related suicides, dropping out, withdrawal, classroom collapse, and various forms of psychosomatic syndromes.

It is necessary to maintain the ideal that «education is a form of transformation borne in conversations with historical and contemporary masters of literature, science, social science, philosophy, and the arts with writers, authors, and professors/teachers variously different, tempting, beguiling, challenging, and inspiring» (Hersh *et al.*, 2008, p. 6). The learner as a whole person does matter, and it is crucial to recognize that «learning ... calls for a multi-centric cognitive, experiential, developmental and transformative process that occurs throughout and across the educational experience, integrating academic learning with student development» (Hersh *et al.*, 2008, p. 7). It is important to «measure student success, learning outcomes, and institutional effectiveness not only in terms of knowledge acquisition and critical thinking, but also in the development of a resilient sense of self, emotional competence, and the capacity for making meaning of and purposeful engagement

with others and the world» (Hersh *et al.*, 2008, p. 7). It is highly suggestive that Hayhoe & Pan (1996, p. 276) pointed out:

We think we should develop individuality in connection with social responsibility, as it was suggested by Obara Kuniyoshi: «A society that pays heed to individuals cannot prosper and an individual that pays no heed to society cannot survive». We should establish the relationship on the basis of the development of individuality with appropriate guidance, so that individuals are able to be aware of their social responsibilities as they learn to know themselves.

Until the Japanese escape from the existing value system, the shift seems almost impracticable and unfeasible because the tendency to judge a person by the numerical information used in the field of education (such as academic ability surveys, test scores, and standardized testing results) and that used in society (such as annual incomes and the number of national certifications/qualifications) is undeniably convenient and well-suited to the current Japanese social structure. It also has definite rationality and reasonableness since those who have a high standard deviation value frequently exhibit distinctive and outstanding performance and efficiency. Therefore, it is unavoidable that the Japanese make strenuous efforts and sacrifices to make a break with tradition, if they choose to do so.

4. A well-rounded education in Japan

Although it has always been paid little attention, a well-rounded education born and bred in Japan has not yet become extinct. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, while Japan adopted industrialization and Western modernization and took an intense interest in Western philosophy, culture, and educational systems, the New Education movement also developed, and various educational progressivists took an active part in it. This movement was to introduce democracy in Japan and carry out curricular and pedagogical innovation and social and educational reforms.

Most of those who were involved looked to the West for «progressive icons such as Francis Parker, John Dewey, Helen Parkhurst and Carleton Washburne in the USA, Maria Montessori in Italy, Jean-Ovide Decroly in Belgium and A. S. Neill in the UK» (Yamasaki, 2017, p. 3-4). However, there were a few who developed and attempted to export their own influential works such as «holistic “Zenjin” education, Children’s Villages School and Lesson Study» (Yamasaki, 2017, p. 4) without heavily relying upon importing foreign cultures and customs.

4.1. Kuniyoshi Obara

According to Sakuma (2017, p. 93), Kuniyoshi Obara was «one of the leading pedagogues of the New Education movement in Japan». He proposed a Zenjin education on August 8, 1921 at the Eight Educational Propositions conference at a higher normal school in Tokyo. Note that the word «zenjin» means «a whole person» in Japanese, so it was once called a whole-person education, but it has recently

become more common and usual to use the term «zenjin» in order to maintain the delicate nuances of Obara's original concept.

In 1929, he founded his own school, Tamagawa Gakuen³, where he put a Zenjin education into practice. At the same time, he gave numerous lectures in many countries to introduce his practice at Tamagawa Gakuen. Well-known, internationally-recognized pedagogues actually visited Tamagawa Gakuen, including German philosophers Eduard Spranger, Otto Friedrich Bollnow, and Hermann Röhrs; Austrian philosopher Paul L. Dengler and leading authority on Alpine skiing Hannes Schneider; Swiss philosopher of education Werner Zimmermann; Danish gymnastics pioneer Niels Bukh; American philosophers and/or educators Harold Ordway Rugg, Theodore Brameld, Hollis Leland Caswell, Robert L. Osborn, and Helen Parkhurst; members of the First United States Education Mission to Japan George W. Diemer, Ernest R. Hilgard, and W. Clark Trow; Dutch phenomenologist and philosopher of education Martinus Jan Langeveld; Australian philosopher H. P. Schoenheimer; and British sociologist Ronald Philip Dore (Sakuma, 2017). Obara was called the «Pestalozzi of Japan» by Röhrs and the «John Dewey of Japan» by Gerald H. Read, and his school was described as the «Province of Education» in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* by Bollnow. According to Sakuma (2017), Obara represented a significant example of a cultural encounter and transnational exchange from Japan to overseas countries (West meets East).

Obara was born on April 8, 1887 in Kushi, Kagoshima, Japan. From an early age, he wished to become a teacher, but since his family lived in extreme poverty, his dream was realized with great difficulty. Thus, he was unable to enter into a regular junior secondary school, and instead enrolled in a communication technology training school where all students received payment from the government so that they were allowed to continue their studies. After working as a telegraph operator at telegraph bureaus for several years, he quit his job to pursue his long-held dream of becoming a teacher. After he entered a normal school in Kagoshima in 1905, he met a missionary for the Presbyterian church and then was baptized.

In 1909, after graduating from the normal school, he then entered a higher normal school in Hiroshima. Having completed his studies at the higher normal school in 1931, he started to teach English, pedagogy, and psychology at a normal school in Kagawa. Even though he was in a full-time job, he was still unsatisfied, so in 1915, he enrolled in the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University (now Kyoto University). While in Kyoto, Obara rented a room in Rishoin, a local Buddhist temple, to enjoy solitary stillness, but at the same time took an active part in the Protestant Rakuyo church. In 1918, he submitted his bachelor thesis entitled «Salvation for Education by Religion», and later on published it under a different title in 1919.

In 1918, he became a head teacher of an elementary school attached to the higher normal school in Hiroshima, where he encouraged the use of school drama/plays in its curriculum. He only taught there for one year, and then was invited to teach as a director at a newly established elementary school named Seijo Shogakko.

³ Its location is as follows: 6-1-1 Tamagawa Gakuen, Machida, Tokyo, 194-8610, Japan, and the school has its website: <http://www.tamagawa.jp/en/>.

During the time at Seijo Shogakko, as already mentioned, zenjin education uttered its first cry in 1921. In the 1920's, he set out on his lifelong project, namely, building two academic towns in the form of a garden city centered on an academic campus. First, Seijo Gakuen⁴ was established in 1926, and then Tamagawa Gakuen in 1929. Both schools were located in the suburbs of Tokyo and had quiet and rich natural environments resembling the country boarding schools of Hermann Lietz, Kurt Hahn, and so forth. In 1933, a school dispute between two opposing groups – pro-Obara and anti-Obara – was such that he resigned from his post as principal at Seijo Gakuen and consequently devoted himself to Tamagawa Gakuen. On December 13, 1977, he passed away, and the epitaph engraved on his tombstone is «Pioneer of New Education».

The closing of this section presents a good opportunity to touch on his flexible, syncretistic, and comprehensive attitude. As he regarded that any philosophical and ideological theory had some contributions for enriching human perspectives, this attitude also applied to the way he thought about religious faith. Although he was a devout Christian, «he did not belong to any specific church, nor did he reject messages from other religions» (Kobayashi, 2004, p. 238). In fact, he used scriptures and doctrines of Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, and other religions as teaching materials in his religious and moral education.

4.2. A Zenjin education

How has Tamagawa Gakuen developed? According to Sakuma (2017), Obara's education can be condensed in the 12 precepts in Table 1.

Table 1. 12 Precepts of Education at Tamagawa Gakuen

Zenjin education	Obara regarded education in Japan as an angular education because it was concentrated heavily on preparation for entrance examinations. On the other hand, he believed a true education should fully and harmoniously incorporate values of human culture into personality.
Respect individuality	Obara believed it was the most important for children to discover one's own true self and live a full life within the limitation given by God.
Self-learning and autonomy	Obara connected this precept with Arbeitsschule (i.e., work school) to show that children had to solve problems they confronted through their own efforts.
Efficient education	Obara strongly suggested that by improving various facets of educational environments such as facilities, teaching tools, teaching methodologies, technologies, education would be of higher efficiency.

⁴ Its location is as follows: 6-1-20 Seijo, Setagaya, Tokyo, 157-8511, Japan, and the school has its website (Japanese): <http://www.seijogakuen.ed.jp/>.

Education with scientific evidence	Obara asserted that educational should be based on an immutable educational ideal, and its practice should be based on scientific evidence and scientific foundations.
Appreciation of nature	Obara believed that healthy mind and body were made by abundant nature. He also believed in power that all children had in nature.
Mutual respect between teachers and students	Obara was convinced that teachers should have as warm hearts as Pestalozzi, but at the same time, they should treat children with full rigor in order to respect children's dedication and commitments.
Arbeitsschule (rosaku education)	Obara insisted that the basis of education could only be laid on Arbeitsschule and considered it as a true school because children would learn through their own real experiences (i.e., rosaku).
Coincidentia oppositorum	Obara thought of coincidentia oppositorum as a significant element in character education because apparently contradicting dichotomies such as a relationship between liberty and responsibility were immanent in people, but they should keep them in balance in order to live peaceful and harmonious lives.
Pioneer spirit in human life	Obara aimed to equip children with practical capabilities, so he made a school motto «Be the first to take charge of the most unpleasant, the bitterest, the hardest, and the most difficult and unprofitable work in life and do it with a smile». This was based on the Christian spirit of «going the extra mile» (Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 5, verse 41).
Juku education	Obara claimed that juku where teachers and children acquire various experiences hand in hand was Japan's proud contribution to education because children were also able to meet teachers before and/or after school hours.
International education	Obara advocated international education and exchange programs, and emphasized the importance of face-to-face relationships, which as highly valued for promotion of international understanding.

What especially makes Tamagawa Gakuen distinctive and atypical is that the school was built upon a Zenjin education which was (and still is) an internationally competent form of education. It was begun as a «protest against the partial, narrow or incomplete education arising from an overemphasis on the intellectual» (Sakuma, 2017, p. 103). In *Education of Tamagawa* (1960, p. 400), one of the fundamental shortcomings of the Japanese education system was explained that «education is basically oriented to preparation for entrance examinations to higher schools». Ignoring the creativity and originality of children, which are crucial principles of intellectual education, well-known, prestigious schools tend to put emphasis on teaching by mere memorization. Obara (2003, p. 18) once wrote:

I believe that an excessive attention to preparation for entrance examinations, rote memorization, cramming for tests and exams, mothers who are obsessed with their children's education, the fixation on social climbing, and similar phenomena directly impede the process of developing into a genuine person.

A Zenjin education for him was a key term to refer to a true education as opposed to a biased and inhumane education.

Owing much to German psychologist Hugo Münsterberg and neo-Kantian philosophers Heinrich Rickert and Georg Mehlis, he came up with his own version of a value system theory (Sakuma, 2017). As shown in Figure 2, he divided a person into two categories – mind and body, and subdivided them into six values, namely, truth (*veritas*), goodness (*bonum*), beauty (*pulchritudo*), holiness (*sanctitas*), health (*sanitas*), and wealth (*copia*). These six values correspond with cultural activities of humankind: truth as the ideal of academe; goodness as the ideal of morality; beauty as the ideal of art; holiness as the ideal of religion; health as the ideal of the body; and wealth as the ideal of livelihood. The aim of a Zenjin education is to realize optimal development of a human personality embodied in six values in a well-balanced, well-rounded, and harmonious way. Thus, by uniformly and thoroughly developing these six areas of human culture, a person appears who is a zenjin with irreplaceable uniqueness and who can carry out innovative and creative activities in a variety of fields.

However, by no means did Obara insist upon uniformity in children's pursuit of these six values. Indeed, he put the highest emphasis on the importance of free development of each individual. This was because he believed that the six universal human values would only be realized through unique features of individuals, deriving this from his personal opinion that every individual is unique and specific in his/her way of thinking, feeling, motivation, behavior, value orientation, and personality. In this sense, it is possible to categorize Obara as a convinced individualist.

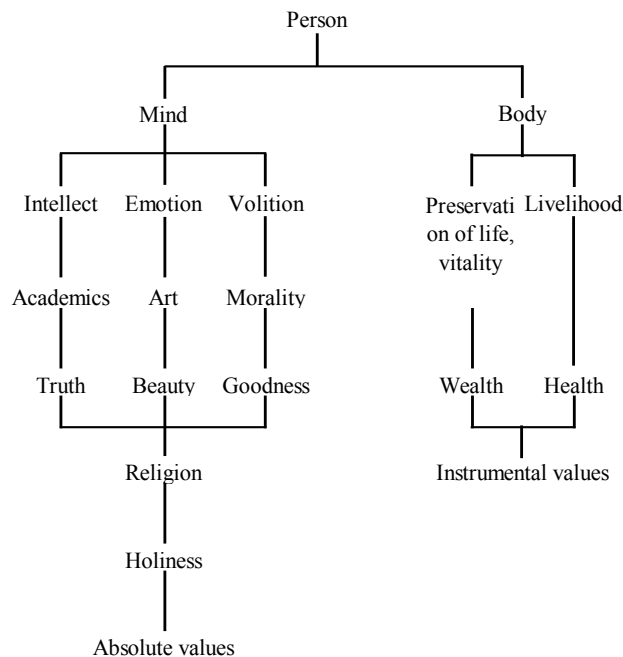
As briefly mentioned above, Obara divided a person into mind and body in accordance with a philosophical notion of dualism, and therefore also divided the six values into two categories: absolute values (truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness) and instrumental values (health and wealth). He saw a normative order of humans in which the mind dominates the body; in other words, «the body shall serve the mind for realization of mental activities that makes sense of human existence» (Kobayashi, 2004, p. 230). Truth, goodness, beauty, and holiness are included in absolute values because they are directly related to mental and spiritual aspects of humanity and thence are intrinsic values. Contrariwise, health and wealth are counted among instrumental values due to the fact that they are necessary and valuable only for realizing and sustaining absolute values. Obara (1969, p. 28) wrote:

It is written in the Bible, «Man shall not live on bread alone». However, in the same way that we require health as an indispensable means for mental activity, we require bread to live. A variety of means are necessary for making our mental activities powerful and effective: innovation, technology, politics, diplomacy, industry, transportation, laws, information, etc.

Obara never disdained or objected to wealth; rather, he encouraged children to become wealthy so that they would be able to develop and progress their mental and cultural activities. Concurrently, he recognized that wealth by itself has no significance and is valuable only when it, as an instrument, achieves absolute values. He used to warn children not to be victimized or controlled by wealth.

Obara recognized three psychological functions of the mind (i.e., intellect, emotion, and volition) as a core domain of cultural activities aiming at realization of values of truth, beauty, and goodness. As the academic is an intellectual construction in pursuit of truth, art (aesthetics) is a quest for beauty where emotion and affection play an essential role. Morality is a core concept concerning goodwill as Kant posited in his ethics. These three psychological functions correspond to three domains of cultural activities, which, each in its turn, are directed at realization of three values. In practice, Obara appreciated arts education and moral education, and regarded them as important as intellectual education. This is why music is emphasized and highly valued at Tamagawa Gakuen; the school is often described as a place that ‘starts with songs and ends with songs.’

Figure 2. Chart of Obara’s Value System Theory



Among all human cultural activities, Obara considered that religion was of the highest order. Religion is oriented to holiness, which is also treated as an ultimate value amongst them all. He did not conceptualize religion as a value that collides with academics, morality, or art. Contrarily, he thought academics, morality, and art would be eventually sublimed into religion if they are delved to an extrasensory and

transcendental dimension. According to him, holiness makes all other values just and legitimate, and this was why he criticized secularized education without religion for being an obstruction in developing a healthy human personality.

4.3. *Tamagawa Gakuen Past and Present*

With its 12 precepts of education and especially with its Zenjin education, Tamagawa Gakuen played a role as a center of ideal New Education organization. During World War II, the school was criticized as liberalism or Christianity, but it survived. After the war, when the First U.S. Education Mission to Japan visited Tamagawa Gakuen on March 26, 1946, the members mentioned previously had a high opinion of Obara's education, and their report (1946, p. 32) gave a description:

... in spite of all handicaps, not a few teachers have managed to attain an admirable degree of flexibility in their teaching. Singly and in groups, leaders of education in Japan have striven to break away from paralyzing restrictions – all honor to these pioneers!

In 1972, twenty-one American educational researchers and policy-makers conducted an educational staff seminar tour of Japan (December 3-20), and they chose Tamagawa Gakuen for a practical example of private academy. As it was mentioned in the report of the seminar tour that «[u]nlike most schools in Japan where the emphasis is preparing students for entrance examinations, Tamagawa is dedicated to developing character or “the whole man”» (Hoffman, 1973, p. 22), Tamagawa Gakuen appeared to have exhibited its uniqueness because the participants stated their impressions:

We are not authorities on kindergartens but the Tamagawa kindergarten is the most exciting we have ever visited anywhere, including our own nursery schools. ... Tamagawa has to be seen to be believed (Hoffman, 1973, pp. 22-23).

The report also highlighted another uniqueness of Tamagawa Gakuen and its education by using the words of Kuniyoshi Obara:

He[Obara] explained that the educational process at Tamagawa is planned to be as free as possible from the spirit of competition. ... Dr. Obara feels that public education is geared primarily to preparing students to take the entrance examinations for secondary and higher education and that students are required to memorize a great deal of information which has little meaning beyond the examinations. At Tamagawa, each student competes only against himself and the information required is directly related to the interests of the students (Hoffman, 1973, p. 26).

And, the author who actually wrote a report of visiting Tamagawa Gakuen left his final comment:

My reaction to the school, the headmaster, and the program is that it is idealistic. It is predicated on preparing students to develop ideals and to live an ideal life. However, since society is somewhat less than ideal, even in Japan, I am left wondering about the adjustment of the graduates to the real world (Hoffman, 1973, p. 27).

Even though the Japanese society remains rather stifling, rough, and harsh, Tamagawa Gakuen still exists as a private comprehensive institution offering an integrated school system where students can progress from preschool to postgraduate education without entrance examinations (i.e., without stiff competition). It is also officially certified as an IB school, a member school of Round Square⁵ (RS), and a membership school of the Council of International Schools⁶. In RS's statement of aims and purposes declared on June 13, 1968 at Box Hill School, a high theoretical and philosophical affinity for a zenjin education can be seen:

... the associated schools have the following aims in common: They are concerned with the 'whole man or woman,' and regard as educationally relevant a wide range of human activities which they seek to include in the school program or deliberately to encourage outside it. ... [T]hey recognize that intellectual quality is itself furthered by disciplines and self-confidence learnt in other fields, by a basis of positive health, and by an imagination well exercised in fields of practical enterprise and in the arts. ... There is always the aim of partnership between adults and senior pupils. ... To this end self-discipline is regarded as a more worthwhile control than imposed discipline. ... Familiarity with a wide range of human circumstance ... is felt to be of first importance in 20th century education.

Furthermore, the school offers various distinctive programs, and one of them is the Tamagawa Adventure Program, which is based on Project Adventure⁷ (PA), a highly successful educational method in the U.S. PA stems from Outward Bound⁸ (OB) founded by Kurt Hahn, who is also a founder of the United World Colleges⁹ and RS as well as an «influencer of the IB» (IBO 2015).

Is it just a coincidence that Tamagawa Gakuen has come across these programs? Bollnow (1972, p. 75) would have answered no, as he stated explicitly in his congratulatory address at the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the founding of Tamagawa Gakuen:

Die Beziehung zu Geheeb deutet zugleich den größeren geistesgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang an, in dem wir ihn sehen müssen. Es ist die Reihe der großen Erziehergestalten, wie sie auch in Deutschland

⁵ See the link: <https://www.roundsquare.org/>

⁶ See the link: <http://www.cois.org/>

⁷ See the link: <http://www.pa.org/>

⁸ See the link: <https://www.outwardbound.org/>

⁹ See the link: <http://www.uwc.org/>

in Hermann Lietz (1868-1919), Paul Geheeb (1870-1961), Gustav Wyneken (1875-1964), Kurt Hahn (geb. 1886) als Begründer von Landschulheimen die Erziehung aus erstarrten Formen befreit haben. Es ist im wesentlichen dieselbe Generation, und in dieser Reihe steht auch, vielleicht als letzter, Kuniyoshi Obara. Vielleicht als letzter, sagte ich: vielleicht ist die Zeit der großen charismatischen Erzieherpersönlichkeiten vorbei und vielleicht muß unsre Zeit einen neuen Führungsstil in der Erziehung ausbilden. Das mag sein. Aber daß es ihn gegeben hat, daß es ihn gibt, ist über die Grenze Japans hinweg ein Glück für die Pädagogik, für das wir von ganzem Herzen dankbar sein müssen.

Inspired by Bollnow’s view, Fujikashi & Obara (2010) compared the 12 precepts of education with PA’s Full Value Contract¹⁰ (FVC), OB Values¹¹, and RS’s IDEALS¹². Here, with a little modification to the existing figure, the IB Learner Profile¹³ is also added to make the comparison more encompassing (Table 2).

Table 2. Commonality Found in Education at Tamagawa Gakuen

12 Precepts of Education	PA’s FVC & OB Values	RS’s IDEALS	IB Learner Profile
Zenjin education	Holistic education approach; Excellence	Concerned with the whole man or woman	All attributes in the Learner Profile
Respect individuality	Respect individual personality	Democracy – familiarity with a wide range of human circumstance	Principled; Caring; Balanced
Self-learning and autonomy	Challenge by choice; Integrity; Excellence	Self-discipline and self-confidence	Inquirers; Knowledgeable; Thinkers
Efficient education	Approach based on learning style and multiple intelligence		Thinkers; Reflective
Education with scientific evidence	Evidence-based learning		Principled; Reflective
Appreciation of nature	Outdoor education and respect for the environment	Environmentalism; Adventure	Open-minded; Caring
Mutual respect between teachers and students	Facilitator-and-learner relationship	Partnership between adults and senior pupils	Communicators; Caring

¹⁰ For more information, see: <http://www.pa.org/about.html/>

¹¹ For more information, see: <http://www.outwardbound.net/philosophy/>

¹² For more information, see: <http://www.roundsquare.org/about-us/what-we-do/ideals/>

¹³ For more information, see: <http://www.ibo.org/benefits/learner-profile/>

Arbeitsschule (rosaku education)	Learning based on experience; Compassion; Excellence	Service; Adventure	Caring; Risk-takers
Coincidentia oppositorum	Individualism and collectivism, static and dynamic learning	Democracy – awareness of domestic and foreign affairs	Open-minded; Balanced
Pioneer spirit in human life	Adventure mind, leadership, and entrepreneurship	Leadership	Risk-takers
Juku education	Distance-education; Awareness on the run; Learning on the run		
International education	Respect for different cultures; Communication skills; Inclusion and diversity	Internationalism	Thinkers; Communicators; Principled; Caring; Open-minded

Tamagawa Gakuen has drawn the attention of overseas schools, and the Zenjin education and 12 precepts of education have been highly evaluated. Accordingly, considerable interest has been drawn from especially those which share a lot in common – a well-rounded education.

Tamagawa Gakuen has affiliated with a diverse range of schools, many of which also are Round Square members. Every year, a number of student exchange programs (both sending and receiving) are offered, and there are always students from abroad spending time with Tamagawa Gakuen students on and off campus throughout the academic year.

5. Conclusion: West meets East

As this paper has clearly shown, there are several points of striking resemblance between a Zenjin education and a well-rounded education. Obara's educational philosophy and theory do include certain complexities, but the «essence of his message was the advocacy of liberal education congruent with the modern context, which enables the free and full development of a well-balanced human personality in each individual» (Kobayashi, 2004, p. 238). He was deeply versed in Western and Eastern knowledge, ancient and modern philosophical theories, and religious traditions and political ideologies, and this flexible, inclusive, and universalistic attitude of his led to the notion of well-rounded.

What a well-rounded education is aiming for is exactly what a Zenjin education is striving for. Avoiding an angular education, which is often criticized for its overemphasis of knowledge, well-balanced, flourishing individuals with self-confidence, dignity, prudence, modesty, cooperativity, and kindness, yet strong

leadership, executive ability, and great resolution will continuously appear as long as there is an education which highly values people as a whole (not only the mind, but also the body and the spirit), liberates people from suffocating, unfair, and unjust restraints, and encourages them to challenge unchallenged tasks, to continuously visualize the future without stopping, to pursue goals, to explore the world which is still unseen, to overcome obstacles and difficulties, to accept change and cherish each other, and to think globally and act locally in order to make a difference for a better tomorrow. This is the education to which Obara and others who believe in its power have deeply devoted their lives.

As a closing remark, Japan has experienced various forms of cultural encounters with the West and consequently was influenced by the great Western philosophies, using them as a driving force for reformation of its education system. However, there were some who had reached the same state as those great predecessors. When Kuniyoshi Obara put his heart into promoting a Zenjin education and education at Tamagawa Gakuen to the wide public, both domestic and international, it was a cultural encounter which traveled from the East to the West, as Tamagawa Gakuen welcomed (and this still continues to attract) a lot of educators and/or policy-makers from overseas.

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