

Summary

In Pursuit of New Liberal Arts Education —A Project for Further Development by the Department of Intercultural Studies—

The Department of Intercultural Studies

This is a compiled file of a college-wide symposium held by the Department of Intercultural Studies at Kobe College on March 18, 2003. Titled "In Pursuit of New Liberal Arts Education," the whole program aims to reexamine our educational ideal and practice and to further cultivate our educational potential as a department of a liberal arts college.

The first part of the program consists of a couple of presentations, one by Professor Takashi Furusho and the other by Professor Tatsuru Uchida. Both of them try to investigate the actual state of an alleged decline in the scholastic ability and cultural sophistication of Japanese youth. Their focus varies, however, in that the former deals with the elementary and secondary education, while the latter sheds light on the college education through an analysis of the questionnaire survey to our students conducted by the Self-Evaluation Committee. These presentations, when read together, will project an issue that many of our students have failed to handle in their educational career—a lack of ability to learn by themselves.

The second part of the program starts with a presentation by Professor Ken Ii on the fundamental policy of our liberal arts education. His vision of liberal arts becomes clear as he stresses the importance of attaining the skill of spontaneous self-relativization with which we not only form our own views but also reform them through mutual relationships with people around us. It is this vision that enables our students to design their lifestyles in which they posit, de-posit, and re-posit their places while trying to live for others.

Following this presentaion, the second part of the program introduces three case studies of educational practice at Kobe College by Professor Yasuo Iwata, Professor Kazuhide Nabae, and Instructor Shinichi Tanaka. Professor Iwata demonstrates his method of teaching based on his fifteen-year long experience as a social worker in social welfare. His presentation covers a wide range of interest in education, for he has changed his way of teaching over the years according to schools, students, class sizes, class types, and the priority of social welfare in the whole school curriculum. Professor Nabae elaborates on a new type of course in liberal arts education by using Sherlock Holmes as a user-friendly tool and replacing the trite term "studying" by his master key "training" along with its connotations in sports activities. Instructor Tanaka illustrates his educational practice, dividing his classes in Japanese Language in the school year 2002 into two categories: one is based on basic research, while the other on application or demonstration. His educational ideal can be seen in his dual effort both to rouse the interest of less experienced students and to deepen the interest of more highly motivated students.

What is left undone in the program is to bring a number of issues raised through all the presentations into a comprehensive view and to start a systematic discussion about how to deal with these issues as a whole department. Another symposium on the same theme scheduled for this coming July will hopefully help us take a step further.