

Miscellany:  
Paid Japanese International Schools

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# 1 Introduction

In this entry, I will share my thoughts, as I came across something quite interesting, in a manner that I haven't thought about before. I came across this thing at a place I often go shopping at in Finchley, a Japanese grocery store in called Atari-ya (アタリヤ) , and outside there are a few boxes that are filled with 3 types of magazine, all free. The first couple of types are British news journals in Japanese, and the final type is a magazine with information about preparation and available international schools and top schools which provide support for returning Japanese students who attended schools elsewhere in the world.

I mean, I'm quite amazed these magazines/news journals are free, and they are very good practice for my Japanese so it's essentially two birds with one stone. That aside, the returning international student magazine (帰国便利帳) (<https://www.kikoku-benricho.com/>) is quite a hefty magazine, 200 pages consisting of some interviews with international Japanese students, or/and people who are rather successful, and have a thing or two to share with regards to education, as well as a catalogue of international schools in Japan for returnees to attend, should they wish to do so.

It's rather interesting to flick through it, since there are plenty of promotional photos in the catalogue section, showcasing the international schools and students in clubs or in the classroom. It includes elementary schools, through to universities, as well as SSHs, SGUs and SGHs, respectively being 'Super Science High schools', 'Super Global Universities', and 'Super Global High schools'. It is a rather odd naming convention to include 'super', but I imagine the names are self explanatory, and so it is easy to see what is emphasised within such schools, as they focus on internationalism, and science, and seem to be quite high standard.

In particular, as I flicked through, I came across an elementary school (西武学園文理小学校) (Seibu gakuen bunri shougakkou) (<https://www.seibubunri-es.ed.jp/>) whose statement by the headteacher was rather catching. Now, starting in the next section, I want to talk about what I saw, because it was quite thought provoking, and made me think a bit more on education as a whole.

## 2 Looking at a Few Individual Schools

The screenshot displays the website for Seibu Gakuen, featuring a grid background. At the top, the title '3つの教育の柱' (Three Pillars of Education) is centered, with the English translation 'Three Pillars of Education (Spirit · Intelligence · Internationalism)' below it. A paragraph of Japanese text explains the school's goal: to raise students who can carry the 21st century, have a strong sense of identity as Japanese, and become top elites in the world through 12 years of education. It lists qualities like global leadership, high motivation, understanding of others, high intellect, judgment, and internationalism. Below this, three pillars are listed, each with a brief description and a blue button with a right-pointing arrow:

- こころを育てる** (Growing the heart): 人を思いやる心、感謝の心、誠実さと命を大切にす優しい心をもった子ども達を育てます。 (Cultivating hearts with empathy, gratitude, sincerity, and a gentle regard for life.)
- 知性を育てる** (Growing intellectual ability): 学びの喜びを体感させ、確かな学力と、創造性、論理性、プレゼンテーション力を育てます。 (Experiencing the joy of learning, building solid academic skills, creativity, logic, and presentation skills.)
- 国際性を育てる** (Growing a sense of internationalism): 一日中英語のシャワーをあびながら日本人としてのアイデンティティを持った真の国際人になるための基礎を作ります。 (Providing an all-day English immersion to build a true internationalist identity while maintaining Japanese roots.)

Figure 2.1: Screenshot of Seibu gakuen’s website, which states the educational philosophy they use

Figure 2.1 shows that this school, although an elementary school, has a rather refined and strength philosophy, if not ethos also. Translated, the philosophy is composed of 3 main ideas: Growing the heart, Growing intellectual ability, and Growing a sense of internationalism.

Within growing the heart, it says that students are taught to appreciate a sense of thankfulness, kindness, and motivation for doing things.

Within growing intellectual ability, it says that students are taught the experience the joy of learning, to affirm learning ability, creativity, and presenting and forming ideas.

Within growing a sense of internationalism, it says students are exposed to English within the school, whilst laying the foundation of an identity within Japanese culture for the students.

Whilst reading this, I saw it as quite an achievement to have this kind of philosophy, and ten times more the achievement if students sought to live out this philosophy within the school. The headteacher also says, in the magazine, not website, that they aim to raise the world's top elite with this philosophy. I was rather moved at this point, having read the philosophy in the magazine. We are talking about an elementary school after all, not middle school, or even high school, which was rather inspiring since they are putting this much effort in to laying the foundations of these student's abilities. There's something quite key also, within the philosophy itself. There is an emphasis on teaching manners, etiquette, and essentially giving students the kit to integrate into society. There is an emphasis on giving students the *ability* to gain knowledge, giving them the way to obtain it, the way to handle it, and the way to use it, which is something I think some students may not have the best capability to do in higher stages of education, due to a lack of it being taught in lower stages. So far, we have students who have gained appreciation of kindness, motivation, societal manner, and the ability to handle information, knowledge and ideas. With the third part of the philosophy, we now also have students who have a sense that the world is far larger than they would have thought, a sense that there is more to what's happening, than just what is in their country. Not only that, but they are exposed to a language and culture that is from another country also (English), and at such a young age, which I think is no less than a good thing.

So, to compare to my experience of the UK education system, I think there is a real lack of emphasis on the first and third philosophies, that this elementary school puts forward, and also a possible lack in teaching students the importance on knowing *how* to use, handle, and apply knowledge through basic reasoning. But more than anything, I think what students would benefit the most from is the sense of internationalism, especially whilst they are young, and can adapt to other languages and cultures rather easily. Throughout my education, languages were not compulsory, and frankly I was glad to have less work as a child, but only because I did not know how important languages could be at the time. I did not see the importance of Spanish, for example, because I wasn't fully aware of the roles Spanish speaking countries had in the world, nor the extent of their media and creative exports. Of course, there are dangers in forcing a student to learn something they don't want to learn, but I fear there is a higher danger in not addressing their motivations first, which ought to be emphasised more, I think, in the lower stages of education.

There is an extent, of course, when I look back on my own school life in primary school, to which I feel as though I didn't learn much. Now, this may simply be because I have forgotten, or because what was taught was so foundational that I simply overlook it now, but I don't find that it as fully packed as the later stages of education such as GCSEs. I know very well that at such a young age, we are only but children, and school is only but an element of our childhoods. What I wouldn't want is for us to be learning advanced algebra at such a young age, I don't envision a school whereby younger students are shoved with knowledge and told to remember it. That is not what I see as being lacked, for I think it would be far better to fill primary education more with a sense of world culture and language, a sense of societal manner, and a sense of methodology for handling knowledge. Not bland information to memorise, but to take advantage of the active minds those young students would have, in order to teach them skills. In this philosophy, what is provided is much less knowledge, but rather *ways*, ways of seeing the world, ways of learning, ways of adapting, ways of sharing, ways of speaking, and ways of interacting. It is those methods, that can be taught to such students, and those methods that will undoubtedly be useful throughout their lives. Methods that, I don't think, were being emphasised enough in my education. And so, I think this philosophy is extremely profound, in that it teaches methodology, not just content, and so students still have a lively period of education, since methodology is never dry, unlike content, since methodology is active and moving, since it is a collection of innumerable processes.

On the note of primary education, I will probably write an entry in the 'Education' series in the 'World' section of my writings. However, one thing to note here, is that I honestly think this particular school is going about a complete, primary education in the right way. However, all of the schools in the catalogue, including this one, seem to be top class, and so all seem to be paid schools, as I will show now.

## 1. 学納金、諸費用について

・年間概算費用 ※2019年度実績

学年	年間概算費用	学年	年間概算費用
1年次	約145万円 <sup>*1</sup>	4年次	約130万円 <sup>*1</sup>
2年次	約112万円	5年次	約123万円
3年次	約120万円	6年次	約114万円

※1 指定用品費含む。

※入学金、授業料、施設設備費、給食費など含む。

※イギリス短期留学（5年次）費：約55万円（1～5年次に積立。上記金額に含む。）

※アメリカ研修（6年次）費：約34万円（5・6年次に積立。上記金額に含む。）

※1～4年次の宿泊研修費（4年北海道研修や3年日光研修など）およびスキースクール費（4～6年次）も含む。

※燃油サーチャージや英検受験費用など価格変動を伴う費用や個別に費用が異なるものは除く。

Figure 2.2: Screenshot of Seibu gakuen's website, which states the school fees

As you can see, although it is in Japanese, the fees are outlined for each year. Now, 145万円 for the first year is roughly £10,000, if not slightly more. That is no easy sum for the first year in an elementary school. I can say that I would be in more debt from elementary school than all the 4 years of university, should I have attended Seibu gakuen, since over the 6 years of elementary school, it is roughly £50,000, yet at my university, it is £36,000. If there is one thing I grossly disagree with, it is not only the amount of money needed, but the principle itself, of a modern, paid education.

I need not do anything more than flick to the next page from Seibu gakuen in the magazine, to find another school, 昌平, Shouhei, which runs a middle and high school. I also show the fees for this school in figure 2.3. For the total of 3 years at their high school, it is the equivalent of around £13,500.

#### 14. 学費等の費用（令和2年度入学生参考）

項目	金額		合計
入学金	230,000円	(入学手続き時)	230,000円
施設設備費	70,000円	(年額)	80,000円
入会金(生徒会、PTA)	4,000円	(入学時のみ)	
生徒会費	6,000円	(年額)	
授業料	29,000円	(月額)	40,600円 (月額)
維持管理費	8,600円	(月額)	
進路振興費	1,000円	(月額)	
PTA会費	2,000円	(月額)	

初年度校納金合計	797,200円
2・3年次の年度単位校納金	563,200円
3年間の校納金合計	1,923,600円

Figure 2.3: Screenshot of Shouhei's website, which states the school fees

I do not wish to oppose the prices both these schools put up, for I did not think about whether their education was worth the amounts they stated or not, as in reality such prices are simply logistical, and the education I am sure in priceless. What caught my attention was paid education, as a whole. You see, I haven't really thought about it, since all my schooling was free, and so was all my friend's. So, by looking at this magazine, it really did get me thinking. In a modern world, a paid education really is something of a backwards step. You see, without a doubt, both Seibu gakuen and Shouhei probably provide an outstanding education, and it seems like they do from their website and the magazine, however it begs the question, should such a complete, full, applicable, practical, and enriching education not be available to students simply on the basis that they are unable to pay for it? Of course, *of course*, there is no child on this Earth that does not deserve as high a class education as possible, not one. It is for the sake of our future I say this, and I'm sure you would agree, but isn't that the problem? The notion of paid, high class education, offers a brilliant future for students, yet as a requirement their parents must have made enough money in the past to be able to send their students to such establishments. And so what we have, is a wonderful future promise, based on outcomes of the past, which is more or less a continuity across certain families who have the money, not a betterment in the number of families who can obtain that money. And so, is not a definite increase in the number of students capable of attaining such an education. And I would say that the hope is, that more and more families, gain more and more money in order to send their children to such schools, but that is not guaranteed.

As I have hopefully been able to show you, the schools in the catalogue seem to be of a high standard, offering a very rich education, which can only result in making the most capable students, who can go out into the world later in life, fully equipped, in spirit and in mind. That is the point. That is, most certainly, the point. What else would be necessary aside from, first of all, teaching children to be fully capable, fully aware, and as knowledgeable as possible, so that they may be able to tackle the problems of the future, which may very well be the most painstaking problems in the whole of human history to come. That is the erroneous nature of a modern, paid education. It implies that higher education, first of all, is optional, that education is compulsory, but this higher kind of education is additional. Why else would these paid schools exists along side regular, compulsory schools. We all know, it would be better, for a child's education, and I don't necessarily say childhood, to send them to a paid school on the basis that the education is of a higher standard. But, the fact that this higher standard of education is not

compulsory, is what I cannot agree with. Of course, I would not agree with a compulsory, *paid*, higher standard of education, but rather a free, *highest possible* standard of education. Not just logistically, but the highest standard capable regardless. We all know, I hope, that this should be the case, but the problem lies in the fact that paid schools today, no matter how much I cannot agree with such a principle, in the modern world, are paid for a reason. They do require monetary support to function. That is where I think there needs to be a sacrifice made. I would like to think that in the future, we will have education provided for children, on a even higher standard than that provided at Eton College, a standard of education that promotes creativity, with also, the practical considerations of what would be required in such a future world. A fine balance, of an education system that attends to the needs of the world and society, whilst maintaining an utmost active, strong, and unbending element of human spirit. A system that is efficient, yet does not compromise on the inherent human nature of its students, and of society. We are far from that type of education, for it would require redefining not only the education system, but also building it into the systems that support it today, integrating it into the very government, and fully, and even then, that would require many changes within government itself.

### 3 Final Remarks

And so, to finish off, I will say that what I gained from looking at the magazine for returning international Japanese students, was simply a strong, absolutely necessary affirmation of the need for free, high standard education, everywhere, and for everyone. It simply does not sit right, imagining a future where children are disadvantaged, because the circumstances of their parents cannot allow them to receive the highest possible standard of education. What we need, in today's world, more than ever, really, *more than ever*, is an investment in the future, for the future. I have emphasised many things in this entry, and I certainly do so for good reason. Withholding education, and also as high a standard of education as possible, from children, is most certainly no joke, as it may cost nothing less than our future as a human race. In today's world, education is not even merely a pillar of society, I would stretch it further, with more than any good amount of reason, and say that education is now the *founding* pillar of society, if we want any more than a drop of hope, in being able to tackle the problems of the future globe.

The notion of paid education almost implies that many children are not capable of attaining such a high standard of education, due to lack of ability. Simply as if they are not suited to it, and that that, is that. I doubt it has much to do with class any more, although that may be the case in some parts of the world. Now, education is not optional, nor additional. With modern science and technology, education is an absolute necessity for anyone and everyone. And so, if a student is deemed to be incapable of attaining a high standard education, the fault lies with the education system, for not catering for all the possible mechanisms of learning, those being not only in theory, but also in practice. I am not sure about how to put it into the right words, but I will say that the most dire and appalling implication, that a modern, paid education makes, is that there is division among children in world, such that some will pay, and some will not pay, some will get a high standard of education, and some will not. This implicit division, is terrible. In all manner of traditions and expectations of the past, there is no fault with paid education. But, *but*, in this modern world, when we must, without blinking, look to the future, in order to overcome our present, we cannot allow the implications of the past to continue, if those implications will provide a hindrance, and in this case, they most certainly do. For a future where *all* children receive the *highest* standard of education, and are given such an education as an implicit sacrifice for the betterment of our future, thus given such an education, *without* the need to pay for anything more than the simple

materials needed, for that, we must change our education systems.

Anyhow, the magazine got me thinking, and so I have written this, and I do hope it may have got you thinking too.

Thank you for reading.

*END*