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Enjoying games, sports, arts and learning

Takeshi Katsura

I'm immersed in the *Go* game recently. Formerly I enjoyed *Go* games only on TV, but I took up the game of *Go* myself, taking the opportunity of my first son who began to play it. On the other hand, soccer has become a spectator sport for me although I liked playing it before. Games, sports and arts (my weak point!) seem to have many aspects in common with learning (particularly, my favorite mathematics).

While elementary schools teach sports and arts in addition to arithmetic and other studies, very few teach games like *Go*. Games are a valuable experience in that players face each other, plan a strategy of their own and make decisions at unknown phases – in repetition of these processes. As such, I think everyone should try their hand at games just like sports even though they are not taught in schools. As one proceeds to junior high and senior high school, hours for sports and arts tend to decrease as hours for the so-called "studies" increase.

Except for colleges specializing in sports or arts, most universities somehow use the so-called "scholarly subjects" only to screen successful applicants from entrance test takers. Of these subjects, mathematics is often used as a major sieve for the academic reason: ease of creating problems for which there is only one answer. But you must remember that any kind of studies, not limited to mathematics, exist not for the purpose of merely serving as sieves.

In my opinion, one of the main reasons behind the development of learning is to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. In this context, I feel that this important aspect of learning has not been emphasized in the process of learning at school.

I don't think there are those who cite the mere acquisition of knowledge as a reason for enjoying games, sports and arts. On the other hand, I believe engaging in these pursuits will bring about good results: not only the enhancement of skills in the respective areas but also the development of creative power, a wider field of vision and communication abilities that cannot be measured by numerical values. It is true that enjoying them does not require special knowledge or experience up to a certain level, but it becomes necessary to acquire knowledge and repeat practices beyond that level.

Such a process itself may not be a pleasant one, but you will be able to bear up against the process only if you think it an unavoidable step to aim high. In fact, the more enjoyment of appreciating these pursuits, the higher the levels you attain. This also holds good for learning, I think.

I think the period of entering university and several years that follow is very important for most students to decide on their future courses to take. At that time, you should free yourself from the imposed idea of dividing fields of learning into mathematics, sciences, social studies, Japanese language, foreign languages and so on. Instead, you should have a broad perspective and consider games, sports and arts as something equal to or inseparable from studies.

I'd also like to advise that when you have to decide on which course to take, you should consider the problem not only from the viewpoints of "What am I good at?" and "Which way appears easy?" but also from the viewpoints of "What is my liking?" and "Which way will be more enjoyable?"

"Will this way be useful for something?" – think about this kind of question later. Rather, you should choose whatever fields you think will be pleasant, convey the fun of your favorite pursuits to others and enjoy your own life. This is my advice.

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慶應理工 検索

Editor's postscript

I came to realize that mathematics has depth and beauty as a research object, in addition to aspects as a field of practical learning. We are now in an era when economic objectives are often prioritized. However, I'd like to see our society look more seriously to encouraging research endeavors into the basics of science. I saw a seminar at Dr. Katsura's lab going on in an at-home atmosphere and in the uniquely Keio style called "Hangaku-hankyo"(Learning while Teaching, Teaching while Learning) – a tradition allowing the student to stand on the platform for a presentation. I have realized anew that learning is not simply for acquiring knowledge.

(Kenji Kobayashi)

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