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## **KUNIYOSHI OBARA**

**1887–1977**

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‘Be the first one to take charge of the most unpleasant, the bitterest, the hardest, the most difficult and unprofitable work in life and do it with a smile.’ This is the motto of the Tamagawa Gakuen (Tamagawa School) founded in 1929 by Kuniyoshi Obara, a Japanese educational reformer. The name of Kuniyoshi Obara is a familiar one in Japan, particularly in connection with his educational theory ‘Zenjin Education’ (whole-man education) and the comprehensive campus of Tamagawa Gakuen founded on these principles. Obara was a leader of the New Education Movement in Japan, and his theory and practice have had a considerable influence on education there since the beginning of the twentieth century, especially in the fields of educational philosophy, liberal education, arts education and vocational education. As a publisher, Obara also contributed to the dissemination of the pedagogy of Pestalozzi and Fröbel among Japanese intellectuals and the public in general.

Tamagawa Gakuen is located in the western suburbs of Tokyo, surrounded by forests and hills in the region of Musashino. Everyone who visits the school observes the above-mentioned motto carved into the gatepost, which stands in the middle of a pond. Many people in Japan have heard this motto somewhere, but what they probably do not know is that it derives originally from the Christian spirit of going the extra mile, based on Jesus Christ’s teaching in the Gospel of St Matthew (chapter V, verse 41): ‘Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.’ Obara was a devout Christian, and it cannot be denied that the educational spirit of Tamagawa Gakuen is closely connected with the Christian faith. At the same time, Obara had a clear cultural identity as a Japanese and an Asian, and he was keen to respect cultural diversity in human values, particularly the heritage of Asian religious and cultural traditions in educational practice.

This syncretistic or universalistic attitude of Obara’s education can be observed symbolically on the hill of the campus where a statue of Avalokitesvara-Bodhisattva stands beside the college chapel. With equal significance, the famous phrase *Egenkenshin*

['Wisdom's eye penetrates the truth'] from a Buddhist sutra *Daimuryôjukyô* [the Larger Sutra on Amitayus] is engraved into a stone tablet next to an evangelical message in front of the Faculty of Engineering of Tamagawa University.

In the following sections we will look at this unique educator, the main lines of his educational theory, the influence of Obara's initiatives on educational movements in Japan, along with a note on some typical features of Tamagawa Gakuen embodying Obara's ideas on education. Special attention will be paid to his syncretistic/universalistic orientation, in that he respected many of the world's religious traditions as part of mankind's common cultural heritage. This position could provoke fierce disputes in terms of both philosophical and theological argument—not helped by the fact that Obara's statements themselves contain apparent contradictions. But due to this syncretistic/universalistic orientation, Obara's educational theory seems to provide significant indicators for the foundation of international education aimed at intercultural tolerance in today's age of globalization, where the dialogue between civilizations on the basis of mutual respect and understanding is gaining increasing importance as an imperative for global citizenship.

## **Biography of Kuniyoshi Obara**

Kuniyoshi Obara was born on 8 April 1887 in the village of Kushi, Kagoshima Prefecture, in a traditional samurai (warrior) family belonging to the ruling class of the Japanese feudal system. The Obaras were a highly cultivated family, and Kuniyoshi's grandfather was a famous educator at a Terakoya (temple school) and a master of painting, calligraphy and music. Terakoya was a semi-formal educational institute mainly for the children of the common people, which contributed considerably to increasing the literacy rate in Japan during the feudal era up to the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century. Obara lost his parents early in his childhood and was adopted later by the Ajisaka family.

Kagoshima is located at the southern edge of Kyushu, the southern main island of the Japanese archipelago. Kagoshima Prefecture was ruled by the Satsuma clan, which played a leading role in overthrowing the Tokugawa Shogun regime and in the following Meiji Restoration in 1868. Many political, economic and cultural leaders in the modernization process of Japan came from Kagoshima. Though Obara himself had no close personal connection with these political and economic leaders, this progressive spirit is said to have had an influence on his development.

After working as a telegraph operator in his teens at Kagoshima Undersea Telegraph Centre, Obara, who had a strong inclination for learning, restarted his academic studies at Kagoshima Normal School and then later at Hiroshima Higher Normal School. During his time at Kagoshima Normal School, he met Ms Lansing (1868–1930), an American missionary, who enrolled the young man in her English Bible class. As an assistant teacher, he proved to be an active follower of Ms Lansing, and this encounter led Obara into the Christian faith to which he remained devoted throughout his life. Although the Christian belief certainly constituted his spiritual backbone, he excluded none of the human values arising from other religious traditions, particularly the Buddhist and Confucian ones. Obara always emphasized the importance of nurturing religiosity in children’s minds rather than resorting to religious dogma.

Obara began his pedagogical career as a teacher of English, education and psychology at Kagawa Normal School in Shikoku. Besides his teaching activities, he was also active in the extra-curricular fields as the head of the boat club and as a dormitory superintendent. In 1915 Obara entered the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto Imperial University (Kyoto University today) at the age of 28. Kyoto, as the former capital of Japan, has been the centre of traditional culture and the Kyoto School, led by the philosopher Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945), played at that time a leading role in the formation of modern Japanese philosophy in which the creative integration of Western and Eastern philosophical traditions was pursued. Obara studied philosophy and education intensively with leading professors of the Kyoto School, such as: Kitaro Nishida; the Kantian philosopher Sanjuro Tomonaga (1871–1951) whose son Shin’ichiro Tomonaga won the Nobel Prize for physics; the aesthetician Yasukazu Fukada (1878–1928); the religious philosopher Seiichi Hatano (1877–1950) who later became the first President of Tamagawa University; and the educational philosopher Shigenao Konishi (1875–1948). The latter was President of Kyoto Imperial University and later became a senior advisor at Tamagawa Gakuen. Under the strong influence of Seiichi Hatano, Obara submitted his bachelor thesis on “The salvation of education through religion” (*Shûkyô ni yoru Kyôiku no Kyûsai*) to Kyoto Imperial University in 1918 when he was 31 years old. The revised thesis was published in the same year under the modified title of ‘Religion as the fundamental problem of education’ (*Kyôiku no Konpon Mondai to shite no Shûkyô*). This was the first book published by Obara and, at the same time, the very foundation of his educational theory. Until the end of his long life, Obara was consistent in his conviction that religious education should be the basis for all other kinds of educational activities.

After graduating, Obara was invited to Hiroshima Higher Normal Attached Elementary School as the head of the Department of Educational Affairs. There he developed his theoretical and practical interest in the decisive role of primary education for human development and concentrated on its reform. Among other measures, it is worth noting that Obara created ‘school drama’ as a medium of education. These dramas played by schoolchildren were to contribute significantly to the renewal of arts education in Japan.

In 1919 Obara was invited by Masataro Sawayanagi (1865–1927), former President of Kyoto Imperial University, to fill the post of the Director at Seijyo Elementary School, which had just been founded in 1917. Seijyo was a centre of the New Education Movement pursuing educational reform under the initiative of Sawayanagi, and Obara employed his best efforts to promote the goals of the movement through various experimental activities. During this period Obara gradually stood out as a leader of the New Education Movement, and his educational theory was conceived at about that time too.

In 1920 Kuniyoshi Obara married Nobu Takai. Nobu, known to children and students alike as ‘Aunt Nobu’, was a competent educator herself and contributed effectively to the development of Tamagawa Gakuen. Nobu was a firm supporter as well as a consultant for Obara in all his works and she remained his faithful partner until the last year of his life, passing away only six months before him.

Beyond the theory and practice of education, Obara proved himself an able administrator. To promote the development of children in accordance with the New Education Movement, Obara founded at Seijyo a second junior high school<sup>2</sup> in 1922, a kindergarten in 1925 and a senior high school in 1926. To benefit from a better environment, he moved all of the schools from the centre of Tokyo to the village of Kinuta in the western suburbs to form the academic complex of ‘Seijyo Gakuen’. Thereby, Seijyo became a comprehensive campus providing educational continuity from kindergarten to the senior high school.

By this time Obara was well known as a standard-bearer of New Education throughout Japan, but he felt a strong need to found his own school in order to implement his theory in a still more fundamental form. This led Obara to found Tamagawa Gakuen in 1929—Obara’s lifework as an educational institution. He started with an elementary school. With the subsequent addition of a kindergarten, junior high school, senior high school and university, Tamagawa Gakuen provided continuous study on the basis of the Zenjin Education ideal. Thus, Obara had created two academic complexes in the western suburbs of Tokyo: Seijyo and Tamagawa. This was not the end of it, however, since Obara also opened Tamagawa

Gakuen in Los Angeles (1930), in Kugenuma (1933), in his home town Kushi (1948) and at the Nanaimo campus in Canada (1976).

Besides the management of Seijyo Gakuen and Tamagawa Gakuen, Obara was also active as a publisher. He founded the Idea Shoin Press in 1923, which published numerous books on educational theory, teaching materials, literary works for children, guidebooks for teachers and parents, encyclopaedias and journals. Obara attached great importance to publication as an effective medium for conveying his educational message. Particularly, he was an enthusiastic protagonist for encyclopaedias as solid and valuable learning materials for children. Stimulated by the twenty-volume set of Arthur Mee's *Children's encyclopaedia*, Obara completed the thirty-volume *Children's encyclopaedia* in 1932–34, the first encyclopaedia for Japanese children. Later, Obara completed further series of encyclopaedias.

Obara regarded personal contact as no less important for children than book learning. After the foundation of Tamagawa Gakuen, Obara invited prominent persons from all over the world to teach his students. For instance, in 1924 Obara invited Helen Parkhurst, leader of the Dalton Plan. In 1930 Hannes Schneider (1890–1955), the master and pioneer of Alpine skiing, came at the request of Obara's students and in 1963 it was Stefan Kruckenhauser, an Austrian skiing tutor. Another invitation was to Niels Bukh (1880–1950), who introduced Danish gymnastics to Japanese youth in 1931. Inspired by Bukh, Tamagawa Gakuen developed its own form of group gymnastics. The German philosopher Eduard Spranger (1882–1963) also visited Japan at the invitation of Obara. Spranger's lecture at the International Conference on New Education in 1937 gave direction to educational reform in Japan after the Second World War.

As can be seen from these examples, it was primarily in the interest of the children that Obara invited these foreign experts to Tamagawa Gakuen. But beyond his main ambition, these exchanges stimulated educational practice in other Japanese schools. The wider impact of these contacts is obviously why Obara was conferred Japanese and foreign decorations. One example was the Order of Knight Commander of Danneberg for the 88-year old Obara by the Queen of Denmark in 1975.

Obara had his residence in the campus of Tamagawa Gakuen beside the chapel. (It is now the Obara Memorial Museum.) He lived on the campus because his maxim was twenty-four-hour education with children and students. After the Second World War, Obara continued to publish numerous books and journals, to give lectures and to organize various conferences, while enlarging Tamagawa Gakuen step by step.

In 1967, Obara was nominated as the President of the World Education Fellowship (WEF) Japan Section and held that office until 1974. For Obara, who was engaged in the movement since his young days, this position was a natural outcome. He laid emphasis on the importance of international education as a contribution to world peace. In 1973 the International Conference of the World Education Fellowship took place in Tokyo with the support of UNESCO and the Japanese Ministry of Education, and the keynote lecture by Obara on the teacher's vocation impressed participants from all over the world. This speech was published in the book 'The way of teachers' (*Shidô*, 1974).

Despite his advancing age, Obara continued to give lectures to his students. His long-cherished wish was to die while teaching. The lecture on Zenjin Education at the summer school for the correspondence course in 1977 was telecast and made a great impression on the Japanese public. In the autumn of that year he was taken to hospital suffering from pancreas disease. Obara died in hospital on 13 December 1977 at the age of 90. He had followed his lifelong partner Nobu to the grave half a year later.

Besides the separate publication of several main works, his complete works have been published in forty-eight volumes and a selection in six volumes.

### **Obara's educational theory: Zenjin Education**

Obara's educational theory is Zenjin Education. The Japanese word *zenjin* means 'whole man' or 'whole person'. Thus, his theory was often called 'Whole-Man Education' or 'Whole-Person Education', but in recent years it has become more usual to use the term 'Zenjin Education' in order to maintain the delicate nuance of the original concept. The aim of Obara's Zenjin Education is to realize the optimal development of the human personality embodied in six basic values in a well-balanced and harmonious way.

Obara counted six basic values: truth (*veritas*), goodness (*bonum*), beauty (*pulchritudo*), holiness (*sanctitas*), health (*sanitas*) and wealth (*copia*). These six values correspond with the cultural activities of mankind, namely: (1) truth as the ideal of academe; (2) goodness as the ideal of morality; (3) beauty as the ideal of art; (4) holiness as the ideal of religion; (5) health as the ideal of the body; and (6) wealth as the ideal of livelihood. This means that culture is recognized as the pursuit of human values in a these domains. Under the concept of *zenjin*, each person should achieve these six human values to the highest degree of their potential in harmony with each other and with the person's self. For Obara, therefore, education is the attempt to accomplish the full development of this *zenjin* personality for each

one of us. He had profound confidence in the potential of education to achieve this, and this confidence directed his activities as an educator. However, by no means did Obara claim any kind of uniformity in the pursuit of these values. On the contrary, he attached the highest importance to the free development of each individual, because these universal human values can, according to Obara, only be realized through our unique features. There is no 'normal' or 'average' person. Every individual is unique and specific in his or her way of thinking, feeling, motivation, behaviour, value orientation and personality, and it is in this irreplaceable uniqueness of the individual that these universal values find their true expression. In this sense Obara was a convinced individualist.

Obara divides these six values into two categories: absolute values and instrumental values. Philosophically, this notion derives from the dualistic tradition that the human person consists of mind and body. From his young days Obara's philosophical thought had been constructed under the influence of Platonic idealism (note that the name of his first publishing house was 'Idea'). This orientation had been further strengthened during his studies at Kyoto Imperial University. From the idealistic perspective, Obara saw the normative order of human beings in that the mind dominates the body; i.e. the body shall serve the mind for the realization of mental activities that makes sense of human existence. The four values of truth, goodness, beauty and holiness are considered as absolute values because they are concerned directly with the mental and spiritual aspects of humanity and therefore are intrinsic values. On the contrary, health and wealth are considered as instrumental values because they are necessary or 'valuable' only for the realization of the former absolute values. As an educator Obara insisted on physical education for the sake of health and the vocational skills for the acquisition of wealth. In his famous book 'The theory of Zenjin Education' (*Zenjin Kyôikuron*, 1969) Obara writes:

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. (p. 28).

Obara never disdained or opposed wealth, but rather encouraged his pupils to become wealthy so as to develop their mental and cultural activities. It is probably no coincidence that many graduates from Tamagawa Gakuen achieved success in the business world. At the same time, however, Obara did not fail to recognize that wealth by itself has no significance and can only be valuable as an instrument for achieving absolute values. Due to the ultimate order between the absolute and the instrumental, Obara warned his students never to become the victims or the servants of wealth.

Obara recognized the three psychological functions of the human mind, namely intellect, emotion and will as the core of cultural activities aimed at the realization of the three absolute values of truth, beauty and goodness. Academe is an intellectual construction in the pursuit of truth, while art (aesthetics) is the search for beauty in which emotion plays a central role. Morality is in essence concerned with the good will as postulated in Kantian ethics. Thus, these three psychological functions of the human mind correspond to the three domains of cultural activities, which in their turn are directed at the realization of three absolute values. This is why Obara regarded arts education and moral education as being as important as intellectual education. The emphasis on aesthetic and moral education along with intellectual education is a fundamental feature of Tamagawa, and this strong moral and aesthetic accent originated in Obara’s theory (see Figure 1).

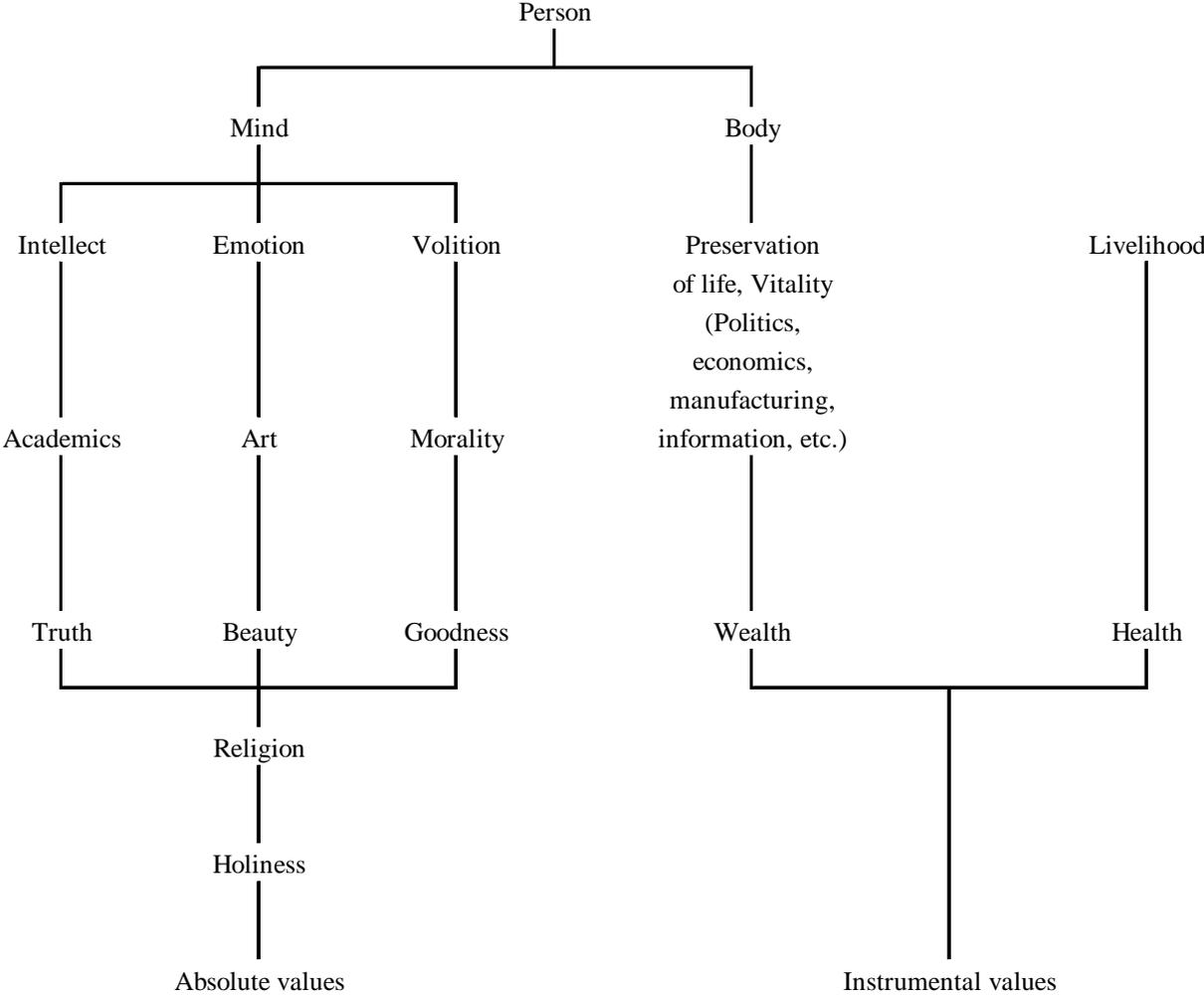


FIGURE 1. Chart of Obara’s value systems theory.  
 K. Obara (1969, English translation 2003). *Theory of Zenjin Education*, p. 30. Tamagawa. Tamagawa University Press. Copyright by Tamagawa University Press.

As mentioned previously, however, Obara saw religion as the ultimate seat of all cultural and educational activities. Religion is oriented to the value of holiness and in his theory Obara recognized holiness as the highest value of all. Obara did not conceive religion as being opposed to science, morality or art. On the contrary, he thought that science, morality and art, when their values attain extra-sensory and transcendental quality, shall be sublimed into religion. Holiness is the value that makes all other human values legitimate, and this view provided Obara with the theoretical basis for his criticism of secularized education without religion as dangerous for the full realization of the human personality. For Obara recognized the pursuit of human values and their development as the very essence of education, and any education that denies the transcendental value of holiness must eventually result in the annihilation of all human values. The critique of modern secularism constitutes an essential aspect of Obara's educational theory and has not lost its actuality. In the current context of Japanese education, the consequences of radical secularism following the Second World War appear to reveal its bankruptcy resulting in a drastic increase in serious educational, social and other problems among young people today.

In the formation of Zenjin Education theory, Obara was influenced particularly by three philosophical concepts. The first one, as mentioned above, was Plato's philosophy of 'idea'. Plato's idealism contributed strongly to the formation of Obara's value-systems theory. It goes beyond theoretical influence: Obara had a sense of deep intimacy with Plato and the ancient Greeks generally, who attached importance to physical and aesthetic education alongside intellectual training. He was impressed by the fact that in ancient Athens music and gymnastics were the focus of education. The second significant point in the history of philosophy that influenced Obara was Renaissance Humanism as represented by Erasmus. The leaders of the Reformation, such as Luther and Calvin, also included the *Zeitgeist* of humanism in their philosophical thinking concerning human development. The humanistic notion of *Homo totus*, the fully developed and widely cultured personality, inspired Obara in his Zenjin Education theory. It was the Swiss educator Pestalozzi, however, who put the finishing touches to Obara's theory. From his early years, Obara acquired a reputation as a researcher on Pestalozzi, and it was partially thanks to Obara that Pestalozzi acquired such popularity among the Japanese. The pedagogy of Pestalozzi influenced Japanese education in a profound way, especially in connection with the New Education Movement.

In this connection, it is noteworthy that Obara published 'The Complete Works of Pestalozzi' (*Pestalozzi Zenshû*) from his Idea Shoin Press in 1928. Pestalozzi advocated the education of genuine humanity through harmonious development of the intellect, morality and

the body. Pestalozzi's '3H' education concerning 'head, heart and hand' found a great resonance in Japan, not least thanks to the efforts of Obara.

Pestalozzi's theory has many other aspects, of course. It is plausible that Obara found in Pestalozzi's theory on the harmonious development of the whole human being some special affinity with his own educational orientation. How the acceptance of Pestalozzi in Japan since the beginning of the twentieth century has been influenced by Obara's interpretation and how it is related to the development of Zenjin Education in theory and practice constitutes a significant research question that concerns many Japanese and foreign educational researchers who are interested in modern Japanese education.

### **The contribution of Obara to Japanese education**

Without doubt Kuniyoshi Obara was one of the most influential educators in modern Japan. Most Japanese associate his name with the concept of Zenjin Education and the liberal education provided at Tamagawa Gakuen. Obara was a vigorous advocate of values education based on religiosity, and he influenced a great number of people through his publications, lectures and the workshops he organized all over Japan, as well as through educational practice at his two private schools.

The influence of Obara on Japanese education cannot be explained without taking the context of the New Education Movement during the Taisho period into consideration. Since the Meiji Restoration in 1868, which abolished the feudal system, the Japanese Government adopted an urgent mandate for modernization. There was a strong move to construct a modern school system in order to enhance the literacy of the people through compulsory education and to produce competent bureaucrats and professionals in the fields of science and technology. Under the motto *Fukoku Kyohei* (national enrichment and the strengthening of the country), during the 1870s and 1880s the Japanese Government developed a meritocracy-oriented education system driven by nationalism. It was open for all without any distinction of social class or origin, providing equal opportunities for socio-economic betterment simply on the basis of academic performance. The construction of such a modern school system was evidently successful in enhancing the general educational level of the people. (At the beginning of the twentieth century, the literacy rate of Japan was already over 90%.) The opportunity for social mobility was also promoted through education. On the other hand, this meritocratic orientation strengthened the competitive character of formal education, resulting in the uniformity of evaluation criteria for all schoolchildren.

In the period 1912–26 when Emperor Taisho reigned, a new critical movement against such uniformity- and competition-oriented education appeared in a number of private schools and several elementary schools attached to teacher-training institutes in metropolitan Tokyo. They criticized the authoritarian method of teaching used at that time. Their criticism was directed at the fixation on social climbing. As an alternative, they proclaimed free development of activities according to the natural and intrinsic interests of children. This movement was called the Taisho New Education Movement. The basic purpose was the recovery of humanity through acknowledgement of individual differences, and the advocates of the movement, who insisted on child-centred education, tried to introduce various free activities of a non-competitive, non-directive and creative character into the curriculum.

In the global context, the foundation of the New Education Fellowship (NEF) by Beatrice Ensor (1885–1974) in 1921 at the Congress of Calais was a milestone in the development of the New Education Movement. Motivated by the spirit of NEF, in 1930 the New Education Society was founded by the pioneer Entarô Noguchi (1868–1941) as the Japanese Section of the NEF. The New Education Movement in Japan was inspired by that of the Western countries, and the foundation of the New Education Society by Noguchi strengthened its links with the wider global network. The NEF was acknowledged by UNESCO as an NGO in 1947 and has developed its activities in co-operation with UNESCO throughout the post-war period. NEF changed its name to the World Education Fellowship (WEF) in 1966.

Obara joined the New Education Movement when he was invited to Seijyo Gakuen in 1918, and gradually he began to play a leading role. Obara was acknowledged as one of the eight leading protagonists of the New Education Movement, along with Choichi Higuchi (advocate of self-learning education), Kiyomaru Kohno (self-moving education), Kishie Tezuka (free education), Kinshichi Inage (creative education), Meikichi Chiba (education by impulsive satisfaction), Heiji Oikawa (dynamic education) and Noburu Katakami (education by art and literature). In August 1921, in the same year as the foundation of the NEF, these eight educators organized the ‘Eight Educators Educational Advocacy Conference’ in the conference hall of Tokyo Higher Normal School, and it was at here that Obara formulated his concept of Zenjin Education for the first time. It coincided with the time when the democratic movement blossomed in Japan.

However, triggered by the Stock Market Crash of 29 October 1929, which resulted in the Great Depression all over the world, Japan in the 1930s inclined rapidly towards militaristic nationalism. A consequence of this was political control over the democratic

movement that quickly escalated into violent suppression. In such a situation, the New Education Movement faded and Obara's Zenjin Education is one of the few elements that have survived. This fact demonstrates that the relevance of Obara's educational message was not confined to the context of the New Education Movement, but had more general implications for educational reform.

The influence of Obara's Zenjin Education on modern Japanese education is manifold. Among others, three aspects that seem to be especially important are: (1) Obara as an educator of liberal education; (2) Obara as an advocate of arts and physical education; and (3) Obara as a cosmopolitan who pursued global education fostering mutual respect and understanding between cultures.

#### AN EDUCATOR OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The basic motive of Zenjin Education was the promotion of liberal education for all people. Although the literacy rate had already reached a high level in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, secondary and higher education were not widely available. Besides institutional issues, Obara complained particularly about the availability of culture and liberal education. He understood that the dissemination of liberal education for the full development of a genuine and cultured personality—*zenjin*—was one of the most important missions incumbent upon him. For this purpose, Obara founded the Idea Shoin Press in 1923. The name was changed to Tamagawa University Press when the university was founded in 1947. Its publications were read widely among children, parents, educators, educational researchers and experts on educational policy, such as the staff of the Ministry of Education. The contribution of these publications to enhancing the general level of cultural knowledge should not be underestimated. Many children came into contact with classical works of world literature in this way. Today, Tamagawa University Press enjoys a reputation as one of the most active publishers of educational books.

Obara's message sometimes had an impact on policy-making at the national level. It is well-known that the former Minister of Education, Michita Sakata (in office 1968–71), who was strongly influenced by Obara's ideas, said at the High-School Principal's Conference: 'The degeneration of Japanese education today is because we have forgotten Zenjin Education.' Since then, the concept of Zenjin Education has been present in the general guidelines for formal education issued by the Ministry of Education.

Another Minister of Education, Michio Nagai (in office 1974–76), was another person inspired by Obara. Nagai, who was a professor at Kyoto University and later became Vice-

President of the United Nations University (UNU), as well as a member of the National Commission for UNESCO, was an expert in higher education and played a central role in university reform of Japan. He was a protagonist for the restoration of liberal education. In Nagai's discussion on the harmonious development of the human personality we can clearly recognize Obara's ideal. It is fair to say that Obara's impact affects the process of higher education reform in Japan today.

In 2002 the Japanese Ministry of Education introduced a new subject 'Integrated Courses' into the formal curriculum of elementary schools and junior high schools. Going beyond the framework of traditional subjects, this activity attempts to promote the schoolchildren's *ikiru chikara* [life-skills]. There is no doubt that one source of this new initiative is the theory of Zenjin Education. Particularly, the emphasis on *Arbeitserziehung* [labour education] in Zenjin Education must have influenced the concept of 'learning by experience', an important characteristics of the 'Integrated Courses'.

With regard to the spirit of enlightenment, it should not be forgotten, however, that Obara's enthusiasm was based on his religious motivation. For Obara, education (liberal education) shall also be directed to the full development of human reason, a substantial aspect of the human being, but this reason shall be inspired by religiosity in its fundament. It is characteristic of Obara's liberal education that rational reasoning and religiosity are not perceived as contradictory, but as hierarchical in the value system for the whole of humanity.

#### AN ADVOCATE OF ARTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

On the basis of his value systems theory—the core structure of Zenjin Education—Obara consistently emphasized the importance of aesthetic education through the practice of music, drama and the visual arts on the one hand, and the importance of physical education on the other. In co-operation with Obara, teachers at Tamagawa Gakuen developed various methods of teaching arts and physical education. This didactical heritage of Tamagawa Gakuen was taken up by many private and public schools in Japan, not only through books and workshops, but also through the schoolteachers themselves who had been trained at Tamagawa Gakuen.

Beyond the unique educational practice at primary and secondary level of Tamagawa Gakuen, Tamagawa University has enjoyed success as a teacher-training institute. A large number of schoolteachers spent part of their lives there and learned various teaching techniques in arts and physical education in connection with liberal education programmes, such as TAP (Tamagawa Adventure Programme), SSP (Spirit Strengthening Programme) or

BHRDP (Better Human Relations Developing Programme). They have subsequently been appointed to schools and have played a significant role in the development of curricula there.

With regard to the supply of teachers, the Department of Education by Correspondence, which was inaugurated in 1950 in order to make Zenjin Education available to the general public, has played an important role. This was the first correspondence programme at university level in Japan leading to the certificate of elementary school-teacher. Since 1950, over 200,000 students have studied this course, and many graduates are active at elementary schools, kindergartens and other educational institutes nationwide. This role of Tamagawa University as a teacher-training institute is surely one of the most visible effects generated by Zenjin Education, whose message seems to be especially effective at the primary level.

#### COSMOPOLITAN EDUCATION

In previous research on Zenjin Education, international education has not been given due attention. But the cultivation of global-minded world citizens with the desire to develop friendship with all nations has been a substantial aspect of Obara's education. From the beginning of his professional career as an educator, Obara placed great importance on international exchanges; he was eager to invite foreign students to Tamagawa Gakuen and to send his pupils and students abroad to carry out studies with an international perspective. For the sake of his students, Obara invited prominent experts in various fields from all over the world. It is worth noting that these experts had a considerable impact on the development of sports and culture in Japan generally.

Zenjin Education consists of twelve precepts, and 'global education' is proclaimed as one of them. These precepts are as follows: (1) Zenjin Education; (2) respect for individuality; (3) self-study, self-autonomy; (4) highly efficient education; (5) education that is scholarship; (6) respect for nature; (7) trinity (children, parents and teachers) in education; (8) Rosaku education (*Arbeitserziehung*); (9) uniting opposites; (10) one who walks the extra mile and one who is a pioneer in life; (11) twenty-four hours or Juku education;<sup>3</sup> and (12) global education.

Although as a Japanese Obara had a strong cultural identity and national pride, he was opposed to any form of nationalism that hinders the promotion of international understanding based on mutual respect among nations. This is already found in his early work 'Thought problems and education' (1919), written shortly after the end of the First World War. In this book Obara expresses his appreciation of the peace initiative of the just-inaugurated League

of Nations, and claims that the maintenance of human solidarity is the most urgent prerequisite for the realization of peace. Obara did not consider human solidarity as contradictory to an awareness of national identity; rather the contrary, Obara saw an important task for education as the integral development of national identity and intercultural solidarity. This integration can only be made possible through the power of culture. In this sense, Obara's educational theory could be called 'culturalism'.

In the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO we find the famous sentence: '... the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.' This 'intellectual and moral solidarity' seems to be congruent in its spirit with the notion of Obara's culturalism aimed at the realization of human solidarity through the cultivation of various human values on the basis of respect for the cultural heritage of the world as 'one's own village'. Obara, who placed great expectation on the League of Nations to achieve peace based on human solidarity, must have been bitterly disappointed by the outbreak of the Second World War. After the war Obara showed interest in the new peace initiatives of the United Nations and of UNESCO. As the President of the World Education Fellowship, Japan Section, Obara referred to the task of education to build up solidarity at the global level for the common good of humanity. Judging from the basic orientation of Zenjin Education, Obara's educational message and the principles of UNESCO's Constitution have a great deal in common. This shall be the heritage that every conscious citizen of the world today can and should share for the construction of intellectual and cultural solidarity of the human family in the face of the terrorism, regional conflicts and other socio-economic as well as educational problems threatening the peace and welfare of our global village.

## **Conclusion**

As we have seen, the educational theory of Kuniyoshi Obara includes 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. His Zenjin Education is stamped with his very unusual personality, but has had a wide and lasting influence on Japanese education in general.

Obara is evidently one of the educational authors who reached the largest audience in Japan. One important reason for this is that his theory maintains a kind of neutrality towards any ideology. This is, however, not the same thing as indifference to ideology. As a philosopher, Obara had a thorough knowledge of Western and Eastern, ancient and modern

theories of philosophy, religious traditions and political ideologies. He did not identify himself with any of them in the strict sense. However, he did not adopt an exclusive attitude towards them either. On the contrary, Obara found in any philosophical and ideological theory some contributions for the enrichment of human perspectives. This attitude also applied to religious faith. Obara was a devout Christian, but he did not belong to any specific church, nor did he reject messages from other religions. On the contrary, he used the scriptures of Buddhism, Confucianism and other religions as teaching materials in his religious and moral education for children. This syncretistic or comprehensive attitude was made possible without driving his theoretical system into collapse because Obara, maintaining a certain distance from any ideological direction, regarded every religious, philosophical and ideological theory from the ancient era, though naturally with different levels of sympathy for him, as part of mankind's common cultural heritage that shall be used positively in educational settings to increase our awareness of fundamental problems about humanity. This position can easily be subject to critical arguments, but it is an undeniable fact that Obara's Zenjin Education has inspired numerous teachers and people concerned with educational problems concerning the development of creative practice in education, not least thanks to its comprehensive orientation. Considering that formal education in Japan today is in a critical situation, particularly due to the increase of school violence, juvenile delinquency, bullying, suicides, dropping out, withdrawal, classroom collapse and various kinds of psycho-somatic syndromes among children, we suggest that the reinstatement of liberal education in school is an urgent necessity because this critical situation is obviously the result of the lack of the ideal *Homo totus* (Zenjin) as the ultimate and real goal of the educational struggle. As to education for international understanding in the context of globalization, Obara's perspective of viewing religions as the common cultural heritage of the human family seems to offer a significant message towards the construction of intercultural tolerance in the minds of people, because this perspective contains a philosophical opportunity to synthesize the cultural and religious differences that cause intercultural misunderstanding and conflicts.

As usual for a modern personality, Obara's theory still has many points to be explored. It is our future task to explore the potential implications of Zenjin Education for the construction of effective peace education aimed at the development of the new global identity for children as the citizens of our common world.

## Notes

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2. In 1926 the seven-year Seijyo High School was launched to cover the entire secondary education stage and the Seijyo Second Junior High School was integrated into this high school, which thus became part of Seijyo Gakuen as an integrated school in 1927.
3. The idea of all-time education (Juku education) is closely related to the tradition of personality education, as practised at private Juku schools run by discerning samurai warriors during the feudalistic Edo era.

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