

Editor's note

Hiroshi Kanai¹

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Successfully climbing the “mountain of knowledge” requires a variety of skills (problem-solving skills). I encourage you to acquire them; to endeavor to make your way up the pathless mountainside, solving problems as you go; and to finally stand at the summit and experience a refreshing sense of accomplishment. From the summit, you will see other mountains far in the distance. Those mountains cannot be seen from the ground; they can only be detected after reaching the top. Among them you may find an extremely worthwhile research topic or one that nobody has discovered yet. It is your ability to create value that will decide which of those mountains to climb next. In the field of academic study, this is the significant ability of being able to find research subjects.

Climbing a path that others have blazed is undoubtedly easier to do, but if you put in the hard work to find a mountain that nobody else has climbed, I think reaching the summit will be that much more moving and rewarding. The American approach of praising a student or the “hunger” of a student from a developing country studying in the United States may foster such a spirit.

The current education system at universities in Japan (i.e., specialized education for one and a half years that

emphasizes rote memorization followed by concentration on an undergraduate or master's thesis) probably provides students with the skills to climb a medium-scale mountain. Granted, this system can be said to have enabled Japan to achieve its miraculous recovery following the devastation of World War II. However, it is quite possible that the mountains that can be climbed with such skills have all already been climbed by others. Given the current economic climate, finding and climbing a mountain that nobody else has found appears to be necessary. I think the time has come for you to acquire the climbing technique (broad and deep expertise), the challenging spirit, and the ability to find new research subjects to achieve that goal. There is no rush. You can also backtrack. However, I would like to see you move forward slowly and steadily.

It is my sincere hope that you will lead worthwhile lives as researchers, acquiring the ability to solve problems, the challenging spirit, and the ability to find research subjects that will serve as treasures for a lifetime, and that it will lead to a rewarding life.

✉ Hiroshi Kanai
kanai@ecei.tohoku.ac.jp

¹ Graduate Schools of Engineering and Biomedical Engineering, Tohoku University, Miyagi, Japan