

Issue 12

What is learning?

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Hello.

This is Kohno Shigeru from Nagasaki University.

After I announced the theme of Planetary Health, I am meeting once per week with several young researchers to study the concepts and systems of Planetary Health by reading academic papers.

Planetary Health covers a very large area. It is deeply connected to many different academic fields. Therefore, it is exactly what we should pursue learning as an academic discipline.

It is obvious that at a university one studies an academic discipline. I think the university is the forum where one boldly challenges oneself with explorations into many unanswered questions, which is not usual in elementary, middle, and high schools.

For example, take the current problem of the coronavirus. There are many questions to be asked.

What is the source of the viral infection?

How is the virus transmitted?

What is the effect of the viral infection on the economy?

What should the international crisis management policy be?

There are many questions from different disciplines other than medicine that should be answered.

And depending on the question asked, the means of investigation (research method) can change and so may the answer. The important thing is how you ask a question.

Excellent research is the result of asking excellent questions.

On the other hand, uninteresting research is the result of questions that do not make sense.

“The most important thing for research is the research question,” it is often said. I think this is correct. The ability to ask “good” questions is crucial and the university is the place where one develops that skill.

Please forward this mail to your colleagues and discuss it.

I’m waiting to hear your opinions. Don’t hesitate to email me.