

Q : Yes, I did, but what is the relationship between schools and the Society of Jesus?

A : In Europe, the 16th century was a period we call the renaissance. It was a period when many new ideas and concepts were freely born - ideas and concepts that were unthinkable until then. For example, people began to say the earth was round, and that it was not the sun that revolved around the earth but the earth revolved around the sun, and so on. I am sure you must have come across names like Copernicus and Galileo. Also, in the field of art we had men like Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raffaello, and others, who created paintings and statues unheard of until then. I am sure you have seen paintings like “the Last Supper,” “the Last Judgement,” “the statue of David,” and so on. Yet, in this period there were no proper schools. Universities were begun around the 10th century, and some of these early universities continue to exist even today in cities like Paris and London. However, there were no secondary schools as we have now. It was a period when people had no idea as to how they could communicate knowledge to others. That was the time when the Society of Jesus was formed, and the Jesuits greatly emphasized learning. As I just said, Ignatius and his friends had all studied and graduated from the University of Paris. When they formed their religious order, they preached and taught the people in order to spread the teachings of Christ to all. They decided to stress the deepening of the knowledge of Christianity, and paid a lot of attention to teaching youth.



Q : Where do we find those schools started by the Jesuits?


A : The earliest school started by the Jesuits was in Italy, in the island of Sicily. It was built in the city of Messina, in 1546. Later, their schools appeared in various parts of Europe, such as France, Germany, Spain, and Portugal. Even today if you were to visit those countries, you will find in every region the name “Society of Jesus,” as for example “Jesuiten Straße,” “Parque de Jesuitas,” and so on.

The Jesuit Schools in Japan

Q : You just said Xavier came to Japan and communicated Christianity. Weren't there any Jesuit schools in Japan? Wasn't Xavier a companion of Ignatius, too?


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Website : <http://www.hiroshimagakuin.ed.jp/>

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Jesuit Education Q & A

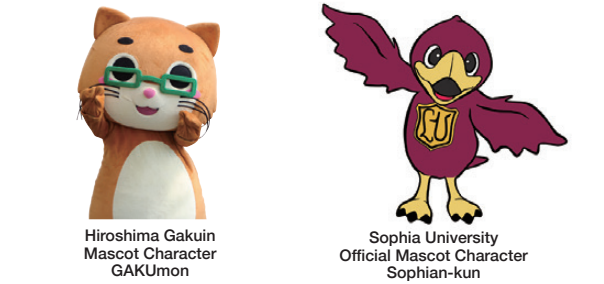


Front Cover of a conclusive edition of Ratio Studiorum "Official Plan for Jesuit Education" 1599



Sophia School Corporation
Catholic Jesuit Center

“Since when have Jesuit schools existed in Japan?”
“What are the special features of Jesuit Education?”
GAKUmon and Sophian-kun
who are keen on learning, went ahead and asked all they wished to know about Jesuit Education.



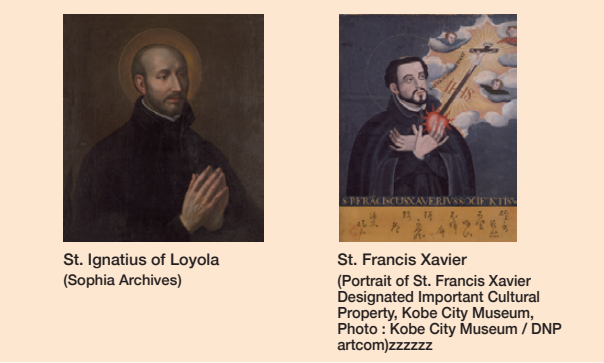
The Society of Jesus and Schools

Q : What exactly is Jesuit Education?

A : By Jesuit Education we mean the type of school education conducted by the Society of Jesus, which is a Roman Catholic “religious order.”

Q : What do you mean by the words “religious order?”

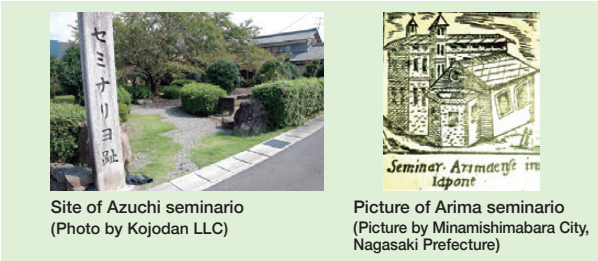
A : A religious order is a group formed within the Roman Catholic Church, to deepen the faith of people. Such groups arose around the 6th century. They were the earliest groups formed with the aim of praying together, so as to glorify God. The group members led community lives that were self-sufficient. On awakening at dawn they first prayed, and thereafter spent the rest of their day in work and prayer. Later, other groups were formed where the members wished to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, and certain groups also appeared where the members led lives of severe poverty. In this context, a famous person was St. Francis of Assisi. What we refer to as the Society of Jesus (or Jesuits) was a group created in the 16th century by St. Ignatius of Loyola, along with some companions whom he met while he was in the University of Paris. At that time he formed the group for the sake of the Catholic Church, which was heavily attacked in Europe. Among those friends was St. Francis Xavier, who first introduced Christianity into Japan. I guess you must have studied about all this in school.



A : That’s a good question. Xavier also wanted to begin a university in Japan, but his stay in Japan was only for two and a half years. Besides, since it was about the time after the Onin civil war, Japan was in a state of chaos in the turbulent Sengoku era. The control of the Muromachi Shogunate had fallen, and aristocrats with power fled to the side of dominant Daimyos. Since Yoshitaka Ouchi of Yamaguchi was at that time a Daimyo with power, Xavier worked in his domain. Later, Jesuit priests came over to Japan and began missionary work, but a missionary named Valignano had an appealing idea. He first of all began a school for youth of samurai, and tried to impart European learning to them. As the language of Europe then was Latin, he taught them Latin, Geography, Mathematics, and even Music. He began such schools in Azuchi and Arima.

Q : Azuchi! Is that the place where Nobunaga Oda erected the Azuchi castle?

A : That’s right! You’re really good, aren’t you? At the foot of Azuchi castle he built a school called “seminario.” In fact Nobunaga too, at times visited the place. Here the pupils learned to use European musical instruments, and it is said that they even entertained Nobunaga. Also, Nobunaga was shown a globe by the missionaries for the first time, and realized that the earth was round, and that Japan was small in comparison to the world. That was when Valignano came up with an unusual idea.



Q : What came into his mind?

A : His idea was to choose four from among the seminario pupils and send them as envoys to Europe. They were to be dispatched as emissaries of leading Daimyos, see and experience all around them, have an audience with the Pope, and get a grasp of Europe’s culture.

Q : Yes! I recall hearing that in my history class. That’s the Tensho Embassy. Isn’t it?

A : Yes. Mancio Ito, Julião Nakaura, Martinão Hara, and Miguel Chijiwa. They left Japan in 1582, reached Portugal after two and a half years, traveled by road via Spain and arrived in Rome. Everywhere they got a rousing welcome. In Rome they met the Pope whom they had longed to see, and the Pope too, received them warmly. They were the first



Japanese to see Europe. In 1590, eight years and five months after having left Japan, they returned to Japan when it was the time of Hideyoshi Toyotomi. Unlike the days of Nobunaga Oda, it was a time when Christianity was banned. The edict of banning continued well into the time of the Edo Shogunate.

Q : Yes, I can see that. Hence there were no Jesuit schools in Japan either.

A : That’s how it was in the Edo Period. Yet in the Meiji Period the Society of Jesus returned to Japan once more and erected a Jesuit university, which was the dream of Xavier.



Q : Oh, I see. What schools did they build?

A : First they began a university in Tokyo. That was in 1913. In 1908 three Jesuits came from Europe. The Pope urged the Jesuits to begin an educational institution in Japan. They got land in present-day Yotsuya, began the university, and called it “Sophia University.” The Japanese word “Jochi” comes from the Latin word “Sophia,” which means “profound wisdom.”

Q : Did they start anything else?

A : Yes. One of those three Jesuits named Dahlmann, felt a university alone would not be sufficient. He felt we needed also a secondary school. Hence in 1938, Rokko Secondary School began in Kobe. It took five years to graduate from secondary schools in those days. After the Pacific war, Japan began to rebuild afresh, and under a new system primary schools took six years, junior high schools three years, and senior high schools three years. Rokko Secondary School immediately became a steady six-year school, consisting of junior and senior high schools. In 1947, Eiko Gakuen began in Yokosuka (it shifted to Ofuna in 1964), and in 1956 Hiroshima Gakuin was established in Hiroshima city. These too, were a six-year institution consisting of junior and senior high schools. Furthermore in 1983, Taisei High School (renamed Sophia Fukuoka) was entrusted to the Society of Jesus, but the school in itself was older.

Special Features of Jesuit Education

Q : I had no idea there were such Jesuit Schools. What is special about Jesuit Schools?

A : Well, we’ve come to something precise and sharp now. We have Jesuit schools all over the world, and what they have in common may be expressed by the words, “men for others.”

Q : What does that mean?

A : A Jesuit named Fr. Pedro Arrupe, who was the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, said that in our schools we must educate those who wish to serve the following categories of people. Those

living in poverty, those forced to leave their countries due to wars or conflicts, those deprived of freedom by oppressive regimes, and the socially disadvantaged. We must educate those who can identify with such people. That is the reason why we use the word “with.” Also, the word “men” does not refer only to males, because even females study at Jesuit schools. These days we say, “For Others, With Others.”

Q : Well, I don’t know English, and so it’s a bit difficult.

A : It’s actually very simple. It just means “people who serve others.”

Q : I wonder. It doesn’t sound very simple.

A : I understand. In any case while studying in such schools you learn a variety of things. If while doing so, you feel within yourself a desire to become such a person, that would be enough. As regards other features of Jesuit Education, we have the English word “excellence” and the “four C’s.”

Q : And what exactly is that? That seems even more difficult to grasp.

A : What it means is this. It is something Jesuit schools have always traditionally viewed as vital. The word “excellence” means surpassing or excelling others. In other words, whatever you do, you do it so as to exceed or outshine. The Latin word for this is “magis.” You do the best you can in your study, and try to outdo yourself. This does not refer only to study, but also as a human being, you try to be the best you can.

Q : And what are those “four C’s”?

A : They are four words that begin with the letter “C,” and they are intimately linked to “excellence.” They symbolize the type of graduates we wish to turn out in our Jesuit schools. The first is “Conscience.” That is, our graduates should be men and women of conscience, with ability to judge between right and wrong. The second is “Compassion,” that is, pity and concern for others. As the Bible says, “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” We need to identify with the feelings of people. The third is “Competence,” the ability to do things fruitfully and efficiently. Society is undergoing rapid changes with the growth in science and technology. We need to adapt to the situation and fulfil our many obligations. The fourth is “Commitment.” This is a difficult word, but it means we need to face up to situations where people are unable to live as human beings, and do what we can to remedy the situation in a spirit of responsibility. Such are the people we wish to turn out.

Q : It seems hard, yet I would like to be in a school like this. Isn’t it difficult to enter a Jesuit school?

A : It’s okay. Study hard and you can make it!

Jesuit Education Developing in the World

In 2021, schools based on the educational orientation of the Society of Jesus are developing in 84 nations around the globe. Our Jesuit network links over 2700 different educational institutions, including 839 secondary education institutions, 193 universities and higher education institutions, etc.. Over three million four hundred thousand youth study at our institutions.

