

Challenge to Diverse Aquarium Education



Koji Takada
Professor of Fukuyama University

I worked in aquariums for nearly 40 years from 1976 to 2015. Since 1980, I have placed "Dissemination of Education" at the center of my work, taking advantage of the curator's qualification. Moreover, after retiring from my aquarium job, I have been studying Museum Education at the aquarium of the University of Fukuyama. It's not an exaggeration to say that most of my work life has been dedicated to aquarium education. It universally recognized that the role of education is extremely important for zoos and aquariums today, and various activities are conducted in many facilities and in the field.

On the other hand, when we look at practical programs, we focus on the dissemination of environmental protection, wildlife conservation, and sustainable fisheries through biological, natural, marine, and environmental education. However, I have been strongly convinced since the beginning of my career in this area that aquariums cannot achieve their educational purposes/goals in such a narrow sphere.

Therefore, I worked on activities to achieve various educational purposes in a broader field. For example, we collaborated with humanities museums, such as history, art, folklore, and museums of ethnology, with social educational institutions such as libraries and community centers, and with kindergartens and the elderly welfare facilities. Educational cooperation with schools utilized information technology called IT and ICT. We also collaborated with business schools such as schools focused in architecture and Art design, with special support schools for children with developmental disabilities, and with local manufactural and agricultural industries. The target of the education, the purpose of the learning, and their achievement goals were very diverse. In school education, we have been attempting to collaborate not only with science-related subjects but also with other subjects such as Japanese Language, Mathematics, Sociology, Physical Education, Music, and Home Economics, in order to learn comprehensively.

Among various creatures, humans are animals that have evolved to demonstrate their "ability to learn" the most. We should consider aquariums as holistic educational institutions useful for all kinds of learning opportunities. As the factors that may threaten the existence of aquariums, such as global environmental problems, issues of wildlife conservation and endangered species, and different values for animal husbandry, are diversified, aquariums must function for all types of learning. In addition, the aquarium should not only be a place for education but also be a public place for humans to improve themselves by gathering and communicating with others.