

COVID-19 and Institutional Awakening of Japanese Universities

Motohisa Kaneko*

Futao Huang

I'd like to invite Professor Motohisa Kaneko, Professor from Tsukuba University to give a talk. Professor Kaneko is also professor emeritus in the University of Tokyo and Professor Kaneko used to be a full-time faculty member at the Research Institute for Higher Education, which I'm now affiliated to. Professor Kaneko, would you please share your slides with us? You are muted. Please switch on your microphone and speak.

Motohisa Kaneko

Thank you very much for inviting to this important seminar. And you might notice that this title of this presentation is lightly changed. It is titled as "institutional awakening", by which what I mean will be clear when I proceed.

[Page 1] For Japanese translator, this awakening may be translated in *Kakusei*. What I want to try to say is this, after Corona, how the Japanese universities have changed and would be changing? COVID-19 caused major crisis in Japanese universities. How did it change the university with consequences?

* Motohisa KANEKO is Distinguished Service Professor, the University of Tsukuba; and Professor Emeritus, the University of Tokyo. Professor Kaneko graduated from the University of Tokyo and received a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He taught at State University of New York at Albany, before joining the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University. He moved then to the University of Tokyo as Professor of Higher Education, and served as Dean of The Graduate School of Education. Since 2012, he is Professor at Tsukuba University. He served various public committees and councils, including the Central Education Council and the Science Council of Japan. Until 2015, he served as President of the Japan Society for Higher Education Studies.

[page 2] Also, what was the status of university before the crisis? Covid crisis exposed underlying problems in teaching and learning in Japanese universities. In order to understand its implications, one has to look back to the making of higher education in Japan before Corona pandemic. I will summarize the prominent characteristics of Japanese higher education and examine what happened during the pandemic, and discuss what those experiences may imply for the future of higher education.

[page 4] I start with characteristics of Japanese education. One is its social context. Business seems committed to lifetime improvement. The formation and transmission of skill, knowledge and workplaces are made on-site of work. There is the emphasis on trainability of workers, which leads to or weak reliance on what students learned in college. From the eyes of students, being unconvinced of relevance of higher education to future work, start job interview even a year before graduation. They are therefore reluctant to dedicate much time for studying outside classrooms. On the side of teachers, it is a given fact. Consequently, they are reluctant to demand much work from student.

[page 5] What they rely on is the lecture, even though many classes are large in size. Also, they believe freedom in teaching, which implies that each teacher plans independently for their class. This generalization may go too far, but still, I think it describes the reality. And that is reflected on the times the students spent after the class. This is the result from our survey. And one of the questions asked how much time students spent preparing and reflecting classes. The two-third of the students said that they spent less than 5 hours a week. This is, in contrast to the result of similar survey in the US, much greater Japanese students tend not to work outside the classroom.

[page 6] There have been policy reforms since 2000s; the background is rising social expectation of higher education. The Abe administration initiated since the 2000s competitive funding for higher education institutions, rewarding or penalizing institutions based on evaluations of adopting measures aimed at alleviating learning. This policy created strong pressures on universities, causing conflicts between administration and faculty members in each institution.

[page 7] Nonetheless, the government initiatives brought about very modest result. Our surveys on both teachers and students undertaken 2010 and 2020

show that between these 2 time periods, teaching practices changed in various ways. However the time students spent studying subjects related to class stayed at virtually the same level. There might be some possible reasons. One is the culture shared among students and teachers. Professor Goodman may be amused that I used the word “culture.” That point is binding both teachers and students inhibited teachers from requiring too much from the students. The culture, being implicit, remained intact.

[page 9] Then how did teachers and students respond to the COVID crisis? As COVID-19 broke out in Japan at the beginning of 2021, the institutions and faculty members adopted the technology of remote class more rapidly than we expected. As of the end of the year 2020, about half of the classes were held in remote format. The classes that were held in remote forms tended to be large lecture classes. It implied that the actual number of students who took remote classes was greater than half.

[page 10] Then, how did teachers react to the environment of remote classes? This is the result of our survey of about 3,000 faculty members taken at the end of 2021. The respondents were asked what they used the following instruments. The blue bar represents the proportion of respondents who answered they used it either frequently or occasionally. It is shown that the many faculty members in fact used various means of remote classes. Most popular practice was showing materials made available before. Checking attendance through learning management systems, asking questions online were also frequently employed means.

[page 11] We also asked the teachers, how they would rate the effectiveness of remote classes from the aspects listed in the figure. One aspect is how they evaluated the students’ time spent more preparing for the class or undertaking assignments. As much as 33% of teachers responded that they spent more time, and only 10% responded loss. In terms of achievement, it is more or less natural. On the other hand, they found problems in the concentration of students during class.

[page 12] This is the result of a survey by the Consortium of Institutional Research. It shows that the proportion of unsatisfied students increased, but not really dramatically.

[page 13] From a few interviews with students, we knew that they tended to have psychological problems from being isolated from other students. But they also answered that the remote classes tended to be more helpful to grasp what the teacher intended to convey. The students' response corresponds to what we found from our survey on teachers. The students also answered that it is easier to ask questions and make comments through the question or comment function of the remote class technology. However, they complained the class assignment amounted too much. Since each teacher assigns tasks, in all they amounted too much.

[page 14, 15] This shows the changes over time that the students spend for studying outside of classroom. There had been not much change from 2016 to 2019. But there was a remarkable increase in 2020.

[page 17] So how should we interpret these survey results? I would argue that because of the emergency created by COVID-19 the old compact among students and teachers effectively holding down the out-of-class study had to be broken. In order to deliver and control remote classes, teachers had to assign tasks in each session. They had to ascertain whether the students listened and understood the contents. It was made possible by remote devices to encourage students' questions and comments. You can require students to view materials before the class.

[page 18] Then an important question is how classroom would change after COVID-19. We asked the teacher to show they rated their experiences in delivering classroom teaching during pandemic. In the figure the blue bar stands for the proportion that was rated either "useful" or "useful to an extent." The yellow bars stand for the opposite. It is remarkable that in many aspects the experiences were perceived by teachers positively. The most positive reaction was "to ask the question through email." The second is the cooperation among faculty members. The third is "to present the entire class schedule before the term," and the fourth is "to assign exercises after every class."

[page 19] We also asked the other aspects of remote class. One is sharing class materials among faculty members and also among different institutions. The next is the use of class-videos on demand. These are rated very positively, especially first three items are responded favorably by more than 90% of teachers. Also, the survey results show that the regular concept that students in these days are

inactive was a myth.

They are shy. When they were given proper devices, such as questions and comments using emails after the class, they reacted more than expected. It is also shown that when required to read materials before class or assigned tasks after class, the students would respond. In other words, the old culture that bound students and teachers can be broken under certain circumstances. It indicates a possibility for the future. The survey also showed that transparency of lecture plan plays a significant role. Communication among the teachers is also necessary or important. In the free-format response in our survey, many teachers expressed expectation to that effect.

[page 20] In the conclusion, COVID-19 pandemic obviously caused various negative consequences. Most obvious among them was the loss of active community where teachers and students react to each other actively. Its effect was particularly serious among the first-year students.

On the other hand, the pandemic revealed some fundamental problems in Japanese college education. From the experiences of COVID-19 pandemic, Teachers were given chances to reevaluate the practices of teaching and to seek possible directions of changes. It was, in this sense, a moment of awakening. And it remains to be seen whether the awakening turns into effective shifts in the culture of college education. I think the unfortunate instance provided was an important opportunity. Thank you very much for your attention.

Futao Huang

Thank you for your wonderful and interesting presentation, Professor Kaneko. We will probably take a couple of questions and comments before we close the first half session. Any questions or comments? You're welcome to raise questions or comments either in English or Japanese. Professor Kaneko, can you see the questions in the Chat Room? I will read the question for you.

You mentioned that teachers have been more cooperative closely during the COVID-19 pandemic. The question is, how do they communicate and cooperate with each other comparing to the pre-COVID-19 period?

Motohisa Kaneko

We did not ask that question in our survey. I think they have various ways of communication. One thing that I suspect is that many of the communications are based on informal basis, even though some organizations in universities organized seminars for exchanging information. I mentioned that teachers

answered that they realized from the experience that the cooperation among the teachers was important, and it is in a way telling what happened.

Futao Huang

Thank you. Any more questions or comments? Yeah. There is one more question. I will read it. There should be two types of approaches in surveying and analyzing students' learning experiences. First, social survey approach as you are conducting. And second, learning theory and science approach as done by Kyoto and Kansai university group. For example, how can we understand the benefit of making the most use of these two?

Motohisa Kaneko

I and my group at the university at Tokyo have conducted various surveys, some of them were on teachers and others on students. We did it around 2010 and again around 2020, and last year in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic. There were not many surveys comparable to ours, except for one by the Ministry of Education. A group of about thirty universities at Kwansai area formed a consortium of institutional research, which has conducted surveys on the students of the member institutions. The result are quite interesting. I used their results in a part of my report.

Futao Huang

Thank you very much. Thank you for your interesting and important presentation. And thank you for your questions. Due to the limited time, I am afraid I have to close the first half session of the workshop. Thanks to the five speakers and questions from our participants.

In the following panel discussion, my colleagues Dr. Yangson Kim will be chairing the panel discussion, and Professor Yonezawa from Tohoku University will act as commentator. So, we shall start our panel discussion at 9:00 pm Tokyo time. So please continue to stay with us. Let's take a short break. Thank you for joining us online and thank you for your presentations as well as your questions and comments. That's all for our first half of the workshop.

Corona-19 and Institutional Awakening of Japanese Universities



International Symposium
COVID - 19 and Higher Education
11 December 2021

Before, amid and after(with) Corona

- ▶ Covid-19 caused major crises in universities. How has it changed the universities? What are the long-run consequences on future universities?
- ▶ One peculiar aspect of Japanese experience is that it exposed underlying problems in teaching and learning. In order to understand its implications, one has to look back to the making of higher education in Japan.
- ▶ This presentation tries to: summarize prominent characteristics of Japanese higher education (Section 1); examine what happened during the pandemic (Section 2); and discuss what those experiences imply for the future of higher education in Japan (Section 3)



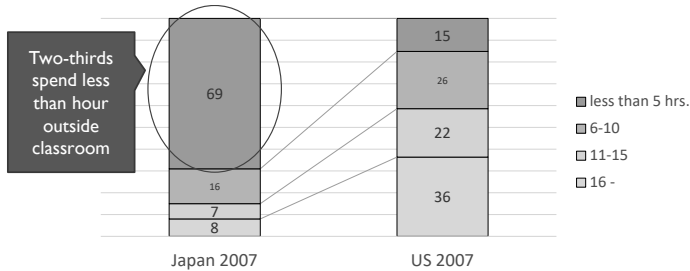
1. Characteristics of Japanese higher education
2. How teachers and students responded
3. Interpretation and Implications for the future

Education in Japanese universities

- ▶ **Social contexts**
 - ▶ Business firms: life-time employment – formation/transmission of skill/knowledge at work places – emphasis on trainability — weak relevance of what students learnt in college
- ▶ **Students**
 - ▶ Unconvinced of relevance of higher education to future work – start job-interviewing a year before graduation -reluctant to dedicate much time for studying outside classroom
- ▶ **Teachers**
 - ▶ Still influenced by Humboldtian idea
 - ▶ Reliance on lecture, despite large class size
 - ▶ Freedom in teaching – each teacher plans independently

Consequence: Weak involvement in learning

- ▶ Implicit understanding between teacher and student – not to press too much burden on students
- ▶ Answer to “How much time students spend in preparing and reflecting on classes?” Hour in a week, Japan and the U.S.



Sources: Japan- CRUMP student survey, US - NSSE

▶ 5

Reform attempts since 2000

- ▶ **Rising social expectation on higher education**
 - ▶ Technological competition Prompted social concern on the qualitative level of Japanese universities
- ▶ **Government initiatives since early 2000s**
 - ▶ Competitive funding rewarding/penalizing institutions depending on implementing designated reforms
 - ▶ Foci of evaluation included various means thought to improve teaching
- ▶ **Strong pressures on institutional leaders**
 - ▶ rising frustration among faculty members

▶ 6

Limited effects of government initiatives

- ▶ Out survey on teachers and students, both in 2010 and in 2020 revealed:
 - ▶ Teaching practices changed in various ways
 - ▶ Nevertheless, the time student spent on studying related to class stayed at virtually the same level
- ▶ Possible reasons
 - ▶ There had been implicit culture binding both teachers and students. That inhibited teachers from requiring too much burden on students.
 - ▶ The culture, being implicit, remained intact even under policy initiatives
 - ▶ Consequently, students' behavior unchanged

▶ 7



1. Characteristics of Japanese higher education
2. How teachers and students responded
3. Interpretation and Implications for the future

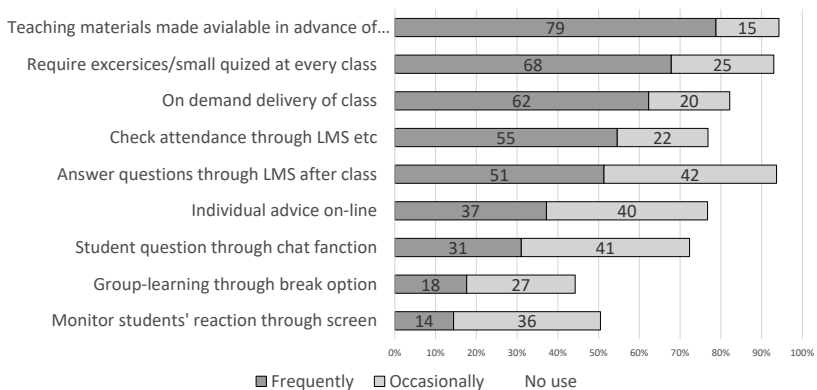
Shift to remote classes

- ▶ Covid-19 started in the beginning of 2021
- ▶ Institutions and faculty members adopted remote technologies
- ▶ As of the end of year 2020, about half of the classes held in Japanese universities were held in remote format.
 - ▶ 19 percent – on-demand
 - ▶ 31 percent – dual direction
- ▶ Classes held in remote formats tend to be large lecture classes. The actual number of students that took remote classes are much higher than half.

▶ 9

Teachers used various instruments

- ▶ Answer to “Did you use the following instruments?”(%)

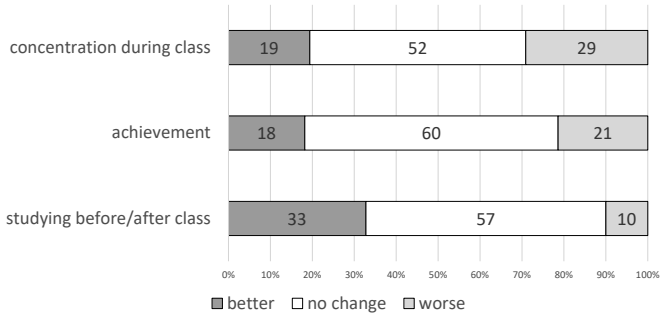


▶ 10

N=2,756
Source: Motohisa Kaneko, University education after Corona, 2021

Teachers' assessment of remote classes

- ▶ Answers to “How would you rate the effectiveness of remote classes in the following aspects?” (%)



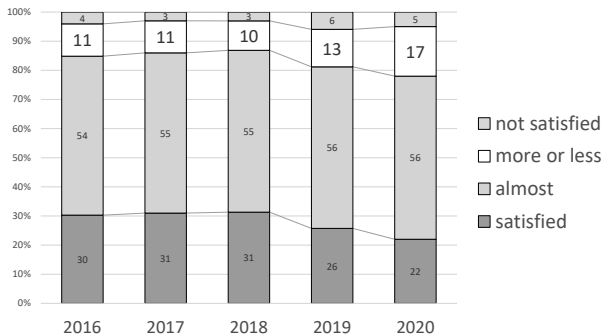
N=2,756

Source: Motohisa Kaneko, University education after Corona, 2021

▶ 11

Students' reaction

- ▶ Answers to “How much are you satisfied with university life?”
- ▶ Student survey in September 2020



Source: Consortium of Institutional Research of Japan, Report of the 2020 survey,

September 2021, page 25.

https://irw.jp/images/E5%9F%BA%E7%A4%8E%E9%9B%86%E8%A8%882020_%E5%8D%92%E8%AA%BFHP%E7%94%A820211006.pdf

▶ 12

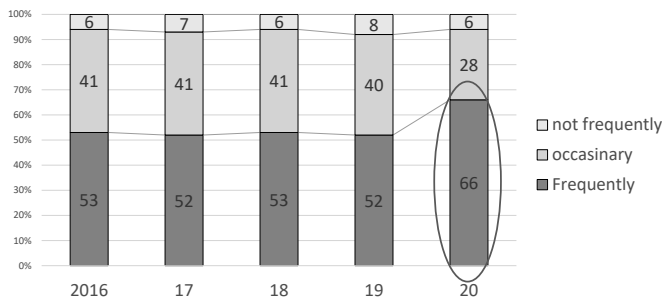
Students' opinions

- ▶ Remote classes are
 - ▶ Easier to comprehend what teachers said than in the large class rooms
 - ▶ Easier to ask questions and make comment
- ▶ Complaints
 - ▶ Each teacher assigns tasks. In all they amount too much. "Assignment Hell"

▶ 13

Changes in classroom practices

- ▶ Students' response
 - ▶ "Was given assignment after every session" (%)

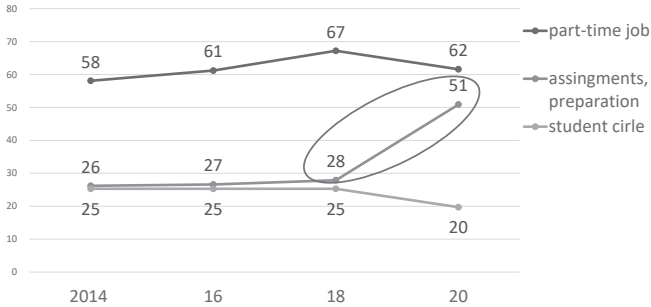


Source: Consortium of Institutional Research of Japan, Report of the 2020 survey, September 2021, page 15.
https://irmw.jp/images/%E5%9F%BA%E7%A4%8E%E9%9B%86%E8%A8%882020_%E5%8D%92%E8%AA%BFHP%E7%94%A820211006.pdf

▶ 14

Time devoted to learning increased

- ▶ Percent of students who spent more than 6 hours in a week for each activity (%)



JASSO, Biannual student survey, November 2021
https://www.jasso.go.jp/statistics/gakusei_chosa/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2021/09/24/press.pdf

- ▶ 15



1. Characteristics of Japanese higher education
2. How teachers and students responded
3. Interpretation and implications for the future

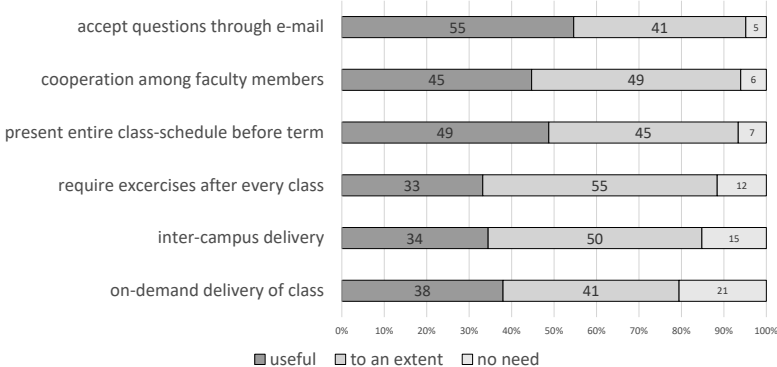
What happened?

- ▶ Because of the exigency, the implicit compact lost its control
- ▶ In delivering remote classes, teachers had to:
 - ▶ Assign tasks for each session in order to assure that students listened and understood the contents
 - ▶ Articulate the purpose and methods used in the entire course and in each session
- ▶ It was made possible through remote devices to:
 - ▶ Encourage students' questions and comments
 - ▶ Require students to view material before the class

▶ 17

How class-rooms would change

- ▶ Teachers' answers to "How do you rate the experiences during the pandemic?"



▶ 18

Practices that teachers wish to retain in future

- ▶ **To encourage/entice students reaction**
 - ▶ Possible through remote devices
 - ▶ It was a myth that students these days are less active
- ▶ **Reciprocal process between teaching and learning**
 - ▶ Requirement to read materials before class and to assign tasks after class can be an effective instrument
 - ▶ Students can accept it
- ▶ **Transparency of lecture plan**
 - ▶ Necessary when requiring more involvement from students
- ▶ **Communication among teachers**
 - ▶ Teaching has to be coordinated closely

▶ 19

Conclusions

- ▶ **Corona pandemic caused various negative consequences**
 - ▶ Overwork for teachers
 - ▶ Students lost active exchanges with other students. University as an active community of students and teachers disappeared. It was particularly serious among first-year students.
 - ▶ Some classes, laboratory and practicum, could not function
- ▶ **Yet, it revealed fundamental problems in Japanese college education. Teachers learnt from the experiences possible directions of changes. It was an moment of awakening.**
- ▶ **It remains to be seen whether the awakening remains to be effective in transforming the culture of education and learning.**

▶ 20