Transformation and Expansion of Liberal Education in Japanese Universities
: With the Activities of the Japan Association for College and University Education

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Abstract

The generalization of the Standards for the Establishment of Universities in 1991 was an important turning point in transformation process for general education of Japanese Universities. Following the 1991 introduction of the general standards for the establishment of universities and the 2012 qualitative shift in university education (especially the spread of active learning), Japanese university education is currently facing the third wave of the education that integrates humanities and sciences, and STEAM education. As this approach to human resource development is about to undergo a major shift, Japanese opinion leaders have presented the basic liberal arts in the new era.

The Liberal and General Education Society of Japan, founded in 1979, changed its name to the current Japan Association for College and University Education in 1997. It has been active for more than 40 years while increasing its membership. The Association’s history has been influenced by major changes in Japanese university education since the 1990s.

As good examples of undergraduate and graduate education reforms emphasizing Liberal Education, Kanazawa University has been reforming its educational system based on the concept of interdisciplinary integration and collaboration among different fields. The key point of Kanazawa University’s efforts to reorganize the curriculum for liberal and common education is that, in undergraduate courses, opportunities to cultivate a broad range of cultures and diverse perspectives has been established in the liberal arts and common education courses to develop the learning strength for specialized education.

Liberal education is an important theme related to the raison d’être of the university. In this borderless era, we believe that it is time to objectively look at the current state of liberal education in our countries and improve it through further enhancing comparative research in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan on the theme of liberal education.

Key Words: Liberal Education, General Education, Japan Association for College and University Education (JACUE), Kanazawa University (Global) Standard, Asian Liberal Education Network (ALEN)

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1. 1990s University Education
Reforms and Liberal Education (General Education) in Japan

According to Yoshida (2013), the history of liberal education (general education) in Japanese universities since 1946, when the new university system was introduced, can be divided into four categories (Table 1). The generalization of the Standards for the Establishment of Universities in 1991 was an important turning point in this process. It had a major impact on university education through new trends, such as (1) more flexible boundaries between general education and specialized education courses, (2) the organization of educational improvement and enhancement activities (FD), and (3) quality assurance through syllabus and class evaluation questionnaires. In particular, the College of Liberal Arts, which was established in several national universities, was abolished, diversifying the nature of liberal education and common education at each university. In addition, the organization for liberal education implementation was unclear, leading to several universities supplementing it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Transformation Process of General Education in Japan (Yoshida2013, 268-269)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td>Citizens for Democratization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Specialized Education</td>
<td>Broad knowledge confronting specialized education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Education Needs</td>
<td>Commonality across specialties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional reform</td>
<td>Equal registration in 3-sequence Introduction of basic education courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trends in Offerings</td>
<td>Preparatory Education Requirements for Science Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>A look at education at a lower level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with High School Education</td>
<td>Strengthening connections by increasing the number of university entrance exam subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National University</td>
<td>Consolidation of former institutions of higher education Role of Old High Schools and Normal Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private University</td>
<td>Faculty-driven structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform task</td>
<td>Institutionalization of organization in charge of general education (organization)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result</td>
<td>Neutral General Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with a university-wide mobilization system.

Since the 2000s, as the function of practical human resource development through university education strengthened, importance was placed on the required qualities and abilities, such as “basic skills for working adults” (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and “undergraduate skills” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). As a result, each university began to set generic competencies (competencies) as common educational and academic goals. Simultaneously, the common education element, which cultivates knowledge and skills useful to society, became stronger than liberal education.

Following the 1991 introduction of the general standards for the establishment of universities and the 2012 qualitative shift in university education (especially the spread of active learning), Japanese university education is currently facing the third wave of the education that integrates humanities and sciences, and STEAM education. In June 2022, the Cabinet approved the Policy Package on Education and Human Resource Development for the Realization of Society 5.0 (Council for Science, Technology and Innovation, Cabinet Office) as an educational reform extending from school education to university education.

Several factors have led to the demand for an integrated arts and sciences education and STEAM education in universities; however, two things must be considered. First is the move toward cross-curricular education based on the new Courses of Study, which was implemented in upper secondary schools, starting from the 2022 academic year. This forced a university education transformation, connecting school and university education. Second is the changing image of human resources required by the new society. In particular, the way to foster human resources who can create science, technology, and innovation to compete globally is a primary question. Table 2 presents a list of major policies and keywords related to university education reform in Japan since the 2000s.

As this approach to human resource development is about to undergo a major shift, Ataka (2020) presented the basic liberal arts in the new era (Figure 1). The industry has voiced the need to develop liberal education in line with this model, from elementary and secondary education to university and graduate school education (Industry-University Council on the Future of Recruitment and University Education 2020).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Reports, Grant Projects, etc.</th>
<th>Keywords</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2008</td>
<td>Mandatory Faculty Development (FD)</td>
<td>FD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2008</td>
<td>Toward the Construction of Undergraduate Course Education (Report)</td>
<td>Undergraduate Competencies, Three Policies, FD/SD, Discipline Reference Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2012</td>
<td>Toward a Qualitative Transformation of University Education for Building a New Future: Toward Universities that Nurture the Ability to Continue Lifelong Learning and Think Independently (Report)</td>
<td>Active learning, visualization of learning outcomes, study hours, assessment policies, degree programs, rubrics, study portfolios, study behavior surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2013-2014</td>
<td>Center of Community (COC)</td>
<td>Community Oriented Courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2014</td>
<td>Top Global University Project (SGU)</td>
<td>Numbering, quartering, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY2014-2016</td>
<td>Acceleration Program for University Education (AP)</td>
<td>Active learning, visualization of learning outcomes, high school-university connection, entrance exam reform, gap year, diploma supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2015</td>
<td>Center of Community Plus (COC+)</td>
<td>Project cooperative organizations, local human resources development curriculum (certificate program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2016</td>
<td>Mandatory Staff Development (SD)</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. History of the Japan Association for College and University Education and the Characteristics of Its Research Activities

2.1. Establishment of the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan and its Activities

The Liberal and General Education Society of Japan, founded in 1979, changed its name to the current Japan Association for College and University Education in 1997. It has been active for more than 40 years while increasing its membership. The Association’s history has been influenced by major changes in Japanese university education since the 1990s. The number of members has increased from 314 members (individual members) at the time of the establishment of the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan to 1,538 members (including group members) as of March 2023.
The three missions of the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan, as stated by its first president Ogiya, in the first issue of the Journal of the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan published by the society, were as follows:

- Facilitate the exchange of information on research activities related to general education and the accumulation and transmission of research results, thereby, promoting the legitimate development of research activities.
- Strengthen the institution in charge of general education as an educational institution arising from the university’s essence as a device for developing learning based on free inquiry and critical analysis, and learning grounded in humanism and supported by human thought and feeling.
- Extend the general education benefits, which liberates people from narrow-mindedness, fosters comprehensive judgment on a wide range of issues, and makes mutual understanding possible beyond differences in position, both within the university and the society at large.

The basic content of the society’s activities was established when it was known as the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan, and the format of the congress primarily consisted of lectures and symposiums. The results continued to be published as papers in the society’s journal. In 1980, the year after the society’s establishment, the Research Project, one of the pillars of the society’s research activities, was launched and the results were published in the society journal. The society hosts an annual conference in June and a research meeting in November. The journal is published twice a year to record the results of these meetings.

The 25-year history compilation committee of the Japan Association for College and University Education (2004) mentioned the characteristics of the society’s membership. While in other academic societies, the members are individual researchers, this society has three memberships – individual members, group members, and journal distribution organizations. The group membership reflects the situation of the universities before and after the association’s establishment and allows them to join the association and help their general education operations. A major characteristic of the individual members is the diversity of their major field of study. As shown in Table 3, since the establishment of The Liberal and General Education Society of Japan, they have covered almost every major field of study to date.

2.2. Change of Name from the Liberal and General Education Society to Japan Association for College and University Education

The biggest event in the history of the Japan Association for College and University Education was its name change from The Liberal and General Education Society of Japan. This issue was first mooted at the Board of Directors meeting on June 5, 1992. After five years of careful consideration, the name of the society was changed to the Japan Association for College and University Education in 1997.

According to the 25-year history compilation committee of the Japan Association for College Education (2004),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Field of Study</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy, Psychology</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Science, Theory of Science, Science Education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; Literature</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Physical education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical work and others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>593</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
there were internal and external reasons for changing the name of the association. Regarding the intrinsic reason, since its establishment in December 1979, the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan continued its activities with the primary purpose of presenting research results on general education at its conferences and exchanging, using, and accumulating information. During this period, insofar as “general education” is “a part of college education,” the Liberal and General Education Society was involved, potentially, with the “whole of college education.” The study of “general education” is, by construction, inseparable from the study of “university education.” Hence, the need to manifest this potential involvement of general education societies in university education has become apparent.

The committee cited the “generalization of establishment standards” in 1991 as an external reason. The society’s name was an appropriate choice to address the new phase of university education while continuing the society’s tradition, given that the term “general education” has disappeared from national laws and regulations, and several universities are reorganizing their liberal arts departments, which were the implementing organizations for general education.

In the Journal of the Association for College Education, Vol. 19, No. 2, published in 1997, the President Sanuki described the mission statement for Japan Association for College and University Education as below.

- To exchange information on research activities, and to publish, use, accumulate, and pass on research results related to “university education”.
- To exchange information on research activities and to publicize, utilize, accumulate, and pass on research results with special emphasis on “general and liberal education”.
- To conduct research activities with an emphasis on the practical aspect of “university education,” that is, the aspect of “teaching” (classroom teaching in education).
- To further enrich and develop “university education” through the above activities.

2.3. Changes in the Society’s Research Themes

The evolution of the society’s research themes is reflected in the themes of “Research Project,” which has been a major feature of the society since the beginning. In the “Research Project,” research groups were organized to address a series of timely issues, and the results were discussed and debated at the Research Project Conferences. The first research topic was “Issues in University Education Related to the Courses of Study for Senior High Schools.” The subsequent issues are listed below, all of which are connected to university education practices at the time and led to the university education reform in Japan. In addition, the name change reflected that the research themes could include a wide variety of issues in university education, with a focus on undergraduate program education.

List of Research Projects

- Phase 1 (Research on issues since the establishment of the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan)
  - Research Project No. 1: Issues in University Education Concerning Courses of Study for Senior High Schools (1980-1984)
  - Research Project No. 4: Research on Faculty Development (1985-1997)
  - Research Project No. 5: Undergraduate Education (1988-1997)
  - Research Project No. 7: Organization and Institution
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- Research Project No. 8: Specific Development of FD Activities (1997-)
- Research Project No. 9: Student Self-Education (1998-)
- Research Project No. 10: Evaluation of University Teachers (1998-)
- Research Project No. 11: Reform of Foreign Language Education (1998-)
- Research Project No. 12: Operation of the Credit System (1998-)

• Phase 2 (Research on issues under the new research committee rules since 2004)
- Research Project No. 3: Dynamics of FD: Follow-up of the First Survey and New Models (2006-2008)
- Research Project No. 4: A New Approach to the Education of Science Specialty Basic Subjects in the Undergraduate Program (2006-2008)
- Research Project No. 5: New Horizons of SD: Toward the Development of University Human Capacity (2008-2010)
- Research Project No. 7: Design and Management of Common Education (2010-2012)
- Research Project No. 8: Challenges and Prospects of Student Support in the Modern Era (2011-2013)
- Research Project No. 9: The Composition and Functions of University Personnel: In the Context of Curriculum Management (2011-2013)

• Phase 3 (Proposed research based on the new rules for Proposed Research after 2013)
- Research Project No. 12: The Role of Student Support and University Education for Students with Developmental Disabilities (2014-2016)
- Research Project No. 14: For the Development and Educational Practice of Science, Mathematics and Engineering (STEM) Courses as Modern Liberal Arts (2017-2018)
- Research Project No. 15: Challenges and Prospects for Writing Education to Train Students’ Thinking (2018-2020)
- Research Project No. 16: An Empirical Study on the System, Training, and Effectiveness of Student Advisors Supporting Active Learning (2018-2020)
- Research Project No. 18: The Potential of Qualitative Research in University Education (2020-2022)
- Research Project No. 20: A Study on University Professional Development and Underpinning Knowledge (2021-2023)
- Research Project No. 21: Gender Equality, Cooperation of Academic and Non-Academic Staff, and Work Style Reform from the Perspectives of SDGs (2022-2024)
- Research Project No. 22: Educational Goals, Evaluations, and Strategies for Final Projects in Undergraduate Programs (2023-2025)
3. Examples of Undergraduate and Graduate Education Reforms Emphasizing Liberal Education (Kanazawa University)

For nearly 20 years since its incorporation as a national university in 2004, Kanazawa University has been reforming its educational system based on the concept of interdisciplinary integration and collaboration among different fields. In addition, in fiscal year 2014, the University was selected as the “Top Global University Project (SGU)” by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), and formulated the “Kanazawa University Global Standard” (Figure 2), which sets educational and academic goals for the university. The curriculum of liberal education and common education was reorganized based on the standards. The Academy for International Core Education was established in 2016 as the implementation organization for these new liberal arts and common education. During this period, similar organizations were established at Kyushu University, Tokushima University, and other universities.

The key point of Kanazawa University’s efforts to reorganize the curriculum for liberal and common education is that, in undergraduate courses, opportunities to cultivate a broad range of cultures and diverse perspectives has been established in the liberal arts and common education courses to develop the learning strength for specialized education. In several academic departments, students are required to take certain courses to broaden their academic horizons during their first year and the first semester of the second year.

Due to a series of educational reforms to provide flexible educational programs that transcend traditional disciplines and opportunities for students to make independent career choices, in FY 2020, the university was selected by the MEXT for the “Human Resource Development Project for Supporting Knowledge-Based Society (DP)”. It is working to strengthen the functions of liberal arts and common education to support

Figure 2
Kanazawa University〈Global〉Standard (KUGS)
specialized education in undergraduate programs and to systematically develop education that integrates the humanities, sciences, and STEAM education, whereby, students can take courses in entrepreneurship, design thinking, and data science. Through the establishment of the fourth academic field, the “Integrated Academic Field,” and the “Leading STEAM Human Resource Development Program (KU-STEAM)” for students in all academic fields, the university is systematically developing innovative human resources by promoting STEAM education that integrates the humanities and sciences across disciplines.

The context of the promotion of integrated and STEAM education at universities is a social and national theme that contains important implications for the future of science, technology, and innovation in Japan. However, it will take a considerable amount of time to break down the customary dichotomy of “arts” and “sciences” that begins in school education, and the stereotypes of “traditional specialties” in society and industry that accept university graduates and postgraduates. It is important to create an environment in which learners can verbalize their study results and their sense of growth in the arts and sciences, and provide convincing explanations to companies and communities and be accepted by them. From this perspective, Kanazawa University is focusing on the ecosystem from “upstream” to “downstream” of human resource development to establish a High School-University-Graduate School Connecting Curriculum Model centered on inquiry and STEAM education and a KU-STEAM Assessment Model to visualize learning outcomes through arts and sciences integration and cross-disciplinary learning. The project aims to establish an Individualized Optimized Learning Support Model that integrates academic advising and peer support.

Following the undergraduate program educational reforms emphasizing liberal education, from FY 2022, the graduate school version of liberal and common education will be required for all graduate schools based on interdisciplinary integration and collaboration across fields to foster researchers and skilled professionals with a broad perspective.

4. Expectations for Comparative Research on Liberal Education in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan

As mentioned above, university and liberal education (general education) in Japan have dramatically changed since the 1990s. In particular, around 2020, the factors affecting university education, included the policy-making process, became diverse. Hence, it has become important for university students to not lose sight of university education. In this context, liberal education is an important theme related to the raison d’etre of the university.

In particular, Japanese university education tends to be Galapagosized, and several Japanese students may be tired of the internal competition. Therefore, it is important to continuously discuss the significance of the universities and the methodology of university education with neighboring Asian countries, taking liberal education as a theme.

This is my personal view, however, even as the research themes handled by the Japan Association for College and University Education have expanded and subdivided in recent years, there is a need to pursue liberal education that has been handled since the days of the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan. In this borderless era, we believe that it is time to objectively look at the current state of liberal education in our countries and improve it through further enhancing comparative research in South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan on the theme of liberal education.

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일본 대학 교양교육의 변화와 확대
- 일본 대학교육학회의 활동을 중심으로

Toru, Hayashi
가나자와대학 교학매니지먼트센터 부센터장, 교수

초록
1991년 대학설립기준의 대강화는 일본 교양교육 변화 과정에 중요한 전환점이 되었다. 일본 대학교육은 1991년 대학설립기준 대강화와 2012년 대학교육의 질적 변화(특히 액티브 러닝의 확산)에 이어 인문학과 과학의 융합, STEAM 교육이라고 하는 제3의 물결에 직면하고 있다. 이처럼 인재 양성 방식의 중대한 전환이 앞두고 있는 가운데, 일본의 오피니언 리더들은 새로운 시대의 교양교육을 제시했다.

1979년에 설립된 ‘일본 교양교육학회’는 1997년 현재의 ‘일본 대학교육학회’로 명칭을 변경했다. 이 학회는 회원을 늘리며 40년 이상 활동하고 있다. 학회의 역사는 1990년대 이후 일본 대학 교육의 주요 변화에 영향을 받았다. 교양교육을 중시한 학부 및 대학원 교육 개혁의 모범 사례로 꼽히는 가나자와대학은 학제 간 통합과 다양한 분야 간 협력을 콘셉트로 교육 체계를 개혁해 왔다. 가나자와대학의 교양 및 공통교육과 교육 프로그램 개선 노력은 학부 과정에서 폭넓은 교양과 다양한 시각을 기를 수 있도록 교양교육 및 공통교육 교과목을 개설해 전문 교육을 위한 학습 능력을 키우는 것이다.

교양교육은 대학의 존재 이유와 관련된 중요한 주제이다. 국경 없는 시대를 맞아 교양교육을 주제로 한 한국, 대만, 일본의 비교연구를 더욱 활성화하여 각국의 교양교육 현황을 객관적으로 살펴보고 개선해야 할 때라고 생각한다.

주제어: 자유교육, 교양교육, 일본 대학교육학회(JACUE), 가나자와대학 <글로벌> 표준, 아시아 교양교육 네트워크(ALEN)