

## Geoscience · Geography education experiences at seven Japanese universities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Online lectures offer many benefits. However, it was a huge test for the freshmen who had never spent their time in college and started living alone without any acquaintance or friend as Japanese universities started in April. Such suffers apply not only to students, but also to lecturers who must bring all their lectures into online. Part-time lecturers had a hard time finding a place to shoot the lectures and had no financial support to get the equipment needed to shoot, which was a burden to the household. Here I would like to share my experience of giving online lectures at several universities and what I have learned from them.

First, adding virtual field trip in on-demand class is very effective. Japanese undergraduate students are gradually becoming accustomed to online lectures and prefer on-demand lectures. Students take on-demand lessons at double speed and rewind what they didn't understand. They can take the class from the beginning even if they are late or absent. Nocturnal students can also take 9 am classes at 9 pm. In addition to the on-demand class, I held an online meeting for a physical geography class which has a lot of freshmen. I set out a task for them to find interesting terrain on the Google Maps and to investigate its land formation process with a small group. Students felt satisfied a lot to find interesting place and communicate with their classmates. I convinced that a virtual field trip will be a very important and indispensable tool for future geoscience and geography education.

Second, active learning in university classes is becoming more and more important. It is also important to attract students' interest and broaden their horizons. People can search freely and get a lot of information easily. However, students who have just entered university do not know what to look for and how to search it. It is necessary to know the background of the knowledge that has been earned by simple memorization. Students should know where and how to get reliable information and how to apply it to their present and future life. The lecturer should give important keywords regarding to the content. The students should practice more to do active learning. The existence of lecturers who can move students and broaden their horizons will become more important.

Third, it is also important to make students aware of the current situation and raise their motivation. I explained the value of the class on the first day for every lecture. The cost can be calculated simply by using total cost paid by the student for 4 years, excluding the opportunity cost, and the number of credits required for graduation. Students pay for one class (fifteen classes in a semester) about \$ 56 in private universities, and the half in national universities. All the students were very surprised at this number. Students felt that they had to be more concentrated on their study. I sometimes hear that universities may disappear in the future, but as long as the educational background is the simplest and fair standard to prove young student's value, no matter how the times change in the future, good universities will not disappear. Universities are valuable because they provide the place and time that students can learn thinking, problem-solving, and creativity rather than the knowledge. Students should learn and think a lot during their lifetime. This keeps students growing. Lecturers have to tell this fact to the students.

Today's students are getting smarter. Their learning speed is very fast. If the students are not interested in

the subject or the lecturer anymore, “natural selection” will be occurred in academic ecosystem. Universities are no longer a heaven. It's time for university executives, staff, faculty, and students to review and renew everything to be survived. Pandemics give us the opportunity to evolve. I hope everyone to do their best to change this crisis into an opportunity.

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