

## Post-Pandemic Pedagogy

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Japan has dodged the bullet of the pandemic so far, mysteriously true to form, but its luck is attributable more to the culture of the public than to government policy (photo). Among the nearly million Mainland visitors who brought their biome to Japan at the unpublicized stage from late 2019, we observed many in late January 2020 wearing surgical masks in the main Osaka arcade and loading pharmacy packages into rolling suitcases. We are habituated to donning masks for many purposes from early December including to avoid influenza, and a huge supply is normally ready in advance of allergy season from mid-February. Yet the outsourced production of Japanese companies was evidently cut off by February, and the supply of masks has yet to meet the demand nearly four months later. Nevertheless, most people have been wearing masks, which we believe is a key factor in Japan's relatively low and currently waning COVID-19 cases.

As a result, emergency restrictions are being lifted, and children are going back to school. Some universities are still committed to online classes for the first semester from April through July. With fewer jobs, many people working from home, and social distancing measures maintained in public, there is a general recognition that pre-pandemic practices including in education cannot simply be restored. This raises questions such as what forms of remote communication have proven useful and will continue, or more specifically, how online education might play a greater role in post-pandemic pedagogy.

As one indication, the free membership NGO World Association for Online Education, one of the first global virtual organizations – at <https://www.waoe.org> and <http://www.facebook.com/waoepage> – has enjoyed renewed interest. This publication reaching out from New York City is another sign of global pan-disciplinary collaboration for effective online pedagogy.

One starting point has been the perceived need for emergency remote teaching (Hodges et al., 2020), with most instructors suddenly thrust into distance education. The online meta-skills needed beyond subject matter mastery in order to *reconstitute academia in cyberspace*, as the author wrote in 1997, or to *turn online education into a professional discipline* through an organization like the WAOE in 1998, may have been taken for granted as accomplished institutional culture in Academia long before 2020. That is, until the pandemic brought the need for effective online education by schools and particularly universities worldwide to a whole new level approaching universality.

Although articles and discussions among academics are proliferating, it is too early for a review of literature, and it would be premature to predict a post-pandemic future while the virus continues to ravage vulnerable populations. We can venture cautious observations about our own situation and make tentative inferences about how certain changing practices of educators being tested with students now, and shared with colleagues worldwide, might contribute to a post-pandemic pedagogy.

Past innovations and cumulative expertise in educational technology with various devices, blended and online classes (such as McCarty et al., 2006; 2017; McCarty, 2010; 2019), provide resources for each practitioner to adapt to current challenges. Teachers are forced into physical separation from learners, wholly remote communication and teaching, in what has always been a social service profession. In terms of degree and pace of transformation, educators are overwhelmed with suddenly increased demands to maintain excellence in sustaining a learning environment. Judging ourselves precisely because of our conscientiousness, we need to accept the best that we and the students can do under the circumstances, understanding ourselves anew as lifelong learners.

Among the myriad issues facing educators is the choice of technologies, which should depend on the local situation more than what is currently at the cutting edge for those with a robust infrastructure and institutional support. When it comes to balancing synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (by next class) activities, one interesting finding is that veteran online teachers are less likely to rely on synchronous technologies like teleconferencing that are used to replicate the

classroom experience (cf. Bates, 2019, Chapter 4.2.3).

While students and teachers can be distracted by new technologies, with the medium eclipsing the message, veteran online instructors tend to be more focused on the learning in e-learning. Students may be more focused on the subject matter in asynchronous activities, which should include recorded video lectures (Fisher, 2020; Nordmann et al., 2020, p. 14), or sharing and enquiring in writing in discussion forums. Among synchronous technologies there are also audioconferences and the chat function in a learning management system such as Moodle. Whereas we know that what a teacher teaches is not what students learn, there might be less of a gap when more is put into writing, although it is laborious for the teacher.

Until this semester, the author would repeat instructions, outlining criteria for papers on the whiteboard, but it is in the second language of the students even if they listen carefully. Putting all the necessary details in written announcements serves as a rubric, so instead of printing out papers and often writing the same comments, the problem areas of student papers can be copied and pasted into e-mail feedback to each student. Being thorough and systematic, finding the affordances of new media, after the initial investment of extra effort, can save time in the long run.

It is laudable for regular faculty members and researchers to try teleconferencing or experimental technologies with classes, knowing that the exciting atmospherics do not absolve them of more basic exercises for students to engage with the subject matter. This author prefers authentic over performative activities, for example, students find song videos with lyrics written, and are urged to sing along to improve their English pronunciation.

When it was decided that teachers could not meet the students this semester, the author considered screencasting both for classes and as a government lecturer (see below). The PowerPoint program has a screencasting function, which can avoid time limits in free online screencasting sites. However, it is recommended that students see the teacher in action at times, through pre-recorded, not synchronously streamed, lectures of up to 15 minutes (Fisher, 2020; Lee, 2020).

Thus, the author calls a new approach Zoomcasting, whereby online lectures consist of a narrated PowerPoint presentation of subject matter by screen sharing, but having a brief beginning and end where learners see the lecturer like a teleconference, recorded into a video that learners watch on YouTube.

In a post-pandemic world, not only will our classes be more blended (Kim, 2020), but also our lifestyle. We may take fewer risks on long trips, including to academic

conferences, since we found it quite vivid to talk with relatives and colleagues by teleconference. Furthermore, we have used more learning management system functions for asynchronous teaching and class management, which will prove useful after classes resume in person.

Meeting people face-to-face is privileged in various ways. Psychologically, among our online friends, we tend to privilege the ones we have met in so-called real life. However, as the increasing capacity of broadband allows for seeing interlocutors almost as if they are with us, then that psychological gap could narrow. Moreover, online distance education brought the promise that learners in developing countries or in relative poverty could access sources of knowledge for upward mobility. Those who survive in a world with increasing bandwidth may be more likely to thrive.

Actually, the author is involved with Japan's overseas development assistance and technology transfer as a lecturer for the government international agency. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) sponsors developing country officials to stay in regional JICA centers for technical training. The author delivers presentations introducing Japan to newly arrived delegations, but now the overseas JICA branches in Africa and elsewhere cannot assemble grantees until at least October 2020. All along, the author has been posting recorded JICA presentations, Q&A, and other media introducing Japanese People and Society. The JICA Kansai (Osaka-Kobe) Chapter is now accepting the author's assistance in placing all orientation subjects online in various media formats, and national headquarters in Tokyo is interested. They recognize that the moment is not passing but represents an opportunity to change an insular culture with a ritualistic communication style and a perfunctory online footprint. The post-pandemic outlook for Japan is thus for more online communication and a greater recognition that the world is interdependent.

In conclusion, the resources and resourcefulness drawn upon in this crisis could serve to improve future prospects in some ways of concern to educators. It is up to us in the global community of scholars to innovate and share expertise.

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