

The Japanese Culture of Higher Education in Science

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Abstract

Studying science in Japan was historically a cross-cultural experience in itself since modern science was originally introduced from the west. Today, science and scientific methodologies appear to be well woven into the Japanese intellectual fabric, and the western-ness of science is hardly felt at all by either students or teachers. Many of my colleagues in science tend to say cultural issues should be irrelevant to science education and research since science is objective and logical. Nevertheless, the difference between teaching science in Japan and in western universities has been felt very strongly by a few colleagues as well as myself. While specialization in Japanese education occurs quite early, learning through aggressive exchange of critical inquiries considered so important in the western tradition seems to start (if it does at all) only at the advanced stage. The much more important channel of learning in Japan appears to be “assimilation”. The origin of this and many other differences can be traced back to politics (education policies), history, sociology, and eventually the realm of cultural psychology of child development.



Speaker profile

Yoshiro Azuma (東 善郎) received his B.S. in physics from Gakushuin University, and a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Oregon. After a postdoctoral stint at the University of British Columbia, he pursued research in atomic and molecular physics as a research staff scientist at Argonne National Laboratory (U.S. Dept. of Energy) and at the High Energy Accelerator Research Organization (KEK, Tsukuba). He is now a professor of physics at Sophia University. His area of specialization has been the study of many electron effects in the photoionization/excitation processes of free atoms and molecules, utilizing various synchrotron radiation facilities over the world. Recently, he has taken up interests in social science issues related to research and education in physical sciences, inspired by his own multi-cultural upbringing, international career, as well as recent globalization initiatives pursued by science faculties of some Japanese universities. Language: English / No Prior registration necessary
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