

Institution: University of Oxford		
Unit of Assessment: 25 Area Studies		
Title of case study: Changing the discourse on Japanese university education policies		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Takehiko Kariya	Professor in Sociology of Japanese Society	2008-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Aug 2013-Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Kariya's sociological research has had an impact in three distinct ways, which have collectively shifted the Japanese discourse surrounding education policy, in particular in terms of how Japan positions itself on the global university stage. These are: 1) changes to policy and political debate; 2) shifting the understanding of policies amongst leaders within the higher education sector; 3) raising awareness of the issues affecting education policy amongst media consumers and improving journalistic reporting on the issues. All of these contributions centre on research that advocates the importance of evidence-based policy-making in education.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Kariya's research provides alternative views on Japanese education policies. As a sociologist of education, he has covered the full breadth of the educational system in Japan. In recent years, his research has focused on how Japanese higher education institutions view internationalization measures differently to other HEIs in the developed world. More specifically, he has critically assessed efforts by the Japanese government to globalise their educational institutions along Western lines. This analysis asserts that policymakers misunderstand key elements that are necessary to achieve their aims. This body of work uses sociological methods to explore tensions between state and (broadly defined) education policy, and emphasises the importance of evidence-based policy-making (R1).</p> <p>Since 2008, Kariya has conducted discourse analysis of policy documents concerning the globalisation of university education in Japan. In particular, he has focused on the Japanese government's 'super-global university' scheme: a government-funded initiative designed to raise the ranking positions of Japanese universities in global league tables by improving their 'international outlook' scores. In addition to examining policy documents, Kariya has analysed the grant proposal documents of universities that have applied for this super-global university scheme. Finally, to contextualise why raising the global ranking positions of Japanese universities was so central to the 'super-global university' policy, this research also delved into the history of successful internationalisation of universities in the UK and examined what impact the global league tables of universities created in the UK (e.g., THE) have had on Japanese policy makers. (R2, R3)</p> <p>Kariya argues that analysing policies from an historical and comparative perspective is essential in understanding how to integrate Japanese university education effectively in a global context. Earlier policies had seen Japanese universities rapidly localise western knowledge into vernacular languages, which reduced the need to use English as a medium of instruction. This created a trade-off between encouraging the use of Japanese language in teaching (which enables more people to attend universities without strong western language skills) and reducing strong oral communication skills in western languages. The resultant weakness of English</p>		

language skills in Japanese universities has had an adverse effect on their 'international outlook' ranking criteria. Without this historical understanding, Kariya argues, Japanese universities will fail in setting realistic and feasible goals. (R2, R3, R4)

One example of the difficulties faced by universities is evident in Japanese government policy towards the employment of 'foreign/foreign-related faculty staff'. Kariya reveals that an insufficient supply of government funding to Japanese HEIs has made universities disinclined to hire foreign staff on tenure-track appointments. Kariya finds that this policy has *increased* the proportion of native Japanese faculty members that are appointed: those who stayed abroad from one to three years on sabbatical leave, without obtaining overseas higher degrees, were included in the reporting, making up on average 40% of the 'foreign/ foreign-related staff' across the universities taking part in this 'super-global' scheme. This research demonstrates empirically that as with earlier initiatives, policy-sceptical universities have found ways to meet the super-global targets without increasing their financial risk. (R2, R5)

Kariya's research reveals that Japanese policymakers have insufficient understanding of the reasons for the success of developed countries such as the USA, UK, and other English-speaking countries in producing a global brand in higher education. R2 and R3 demonstrate that government policies have failed to fill the gap between over-ambitious and idealistic goals and have not provided sufficient resources to meet them. It also uncovers an implicit ideology of economic nationalism behind the policies, which aims to recover the Japanese economy from long-lasting economic stagnation by reforming university education with Western-influenced policies that are inappropriate for Japanese conditions.

The analysis of Japanese education policy from an evidence-based perspective was also evident in research published during the Covid pandemic. In 2020, the spread of Covid-19 in Japan led policymakers to consider delaying the start of the school year from April to September. Policy-makers argued that this would bring the Japanese school year into line with Western countries. Along with other sociologists in Japan, Kariya objectively measured the possible side effects caused by this policy change. Based on concrete evidence calculated from publicly available statistics in 47 Japanese prefectures, the research (R6) predicted the possibility of huge shortages of schoolteachers and day care services.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.[Chapter, available on request] Kariya, T. (2013) 'The State's Role and Quasi-Market in Higher Education: Japan's trilemma' in Goodman, R., Kariya, T. and Taylor, J. (eds.) (2013) *Higher Education and the State: changing relationships in Europe and East Asia*, Symposium Books. ISBN 9781873927762. DOI: [10.15730/books.83](https://doi.org/10.15730/books.83)
- R2.[Authored Book, available on request] Kariya T. (2017) *Okkusufōdo kara no Keishō (The warning bells from Oxford: Japanese Universities and Globalisation)*, (2017), Chūōkōron-shinsha, ISBN: 9784121505873
- R3.[Chapter, available on request] Kariya, T. (2018) *Daigaku Seiakusetsu niyoru mondaikoutiku toiu mondai (Problems in ways of problematisation of university education)* in Sato, I. (ed.) *50 nen-me no Daigaku Kaitai 20 nen-go no Daigaku Saisei*, University of Kyoto Press, ISBN: 9784814001859.
- R4.[Authored Book, available on request] Kariya, T. (2019) *Oitsuita Kindsai, Kieta Kindai (Who killed Japan's Modernity? What comes after Catch-up?)*, Iwanami Shoten Press.
- R5.[Conference Contribution] Kariya, T. (2014) 'Globalization and University Reforms in Japan: Real or Illusory?' in *Reexamining Japan in Global Context Forum*, Tokyo, Japan, December 15. Accessible at: <https://www.suntory.com/sfnd/jgc/forum/007/pdf/007.pdf>.
- R6.[Working Paper] Kariya, T. et.al. (2020) *9 Gatsu nyugaku dounyū ni taisuru kyōiku hoiku niokeru shakaitekieikyō nikansuru hōkokusho (A report on potential influences of the September School Entry Policy on Japan's education and daycare services)*. University of Oxford Japan Office.

https://oxfordujapan.org/wordpress/files/2020/05/September_enrollment_simulation_200525.pdf

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Shaping Japanese higher education policy

Kariya's research featured in discussions that took place on 14 November 2018 in the Central Council of Education of MEXT, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. This Council is the main policy-making committee for education policy in Japan. Discussing how Japan should create its own model of higher education, one Council member stated that according to Prof. Kariya of Oxford University, the relative strengths of Japanese university education should be more critically pursued rather than just being based on models outside of Japan:

'Mr. Kariya in Oxford also said... Japan can, in a sense, be a model for most countries outside Europe, and in that sense, the United States and Europe can have a special perspective. ...internationalization only at such a level as English publications, impact factor, etc. is not harmful, but that is not the only problem I thought.' (S1) (translated from Japanese, citing ideas from R2)

The citation by name of an academic, especially one based overseas, is highly unusual in Japanese policymaking circles.

The impact of Kariya's research on the thinking of ministers in MEXT is also acknowledged by the former vice minister of MEXT (Vice-Minister from 2013-2015). He reflected that:

'[Kariya's] work, supported by robust empirical evidence, had some impact on our policy when the MEXT's Central Council summarised a policy report titled "Grand Design for Higher Education in 2040" (2019) in acknowledging the importance of pursuing our own model rather than by simply adopting western models. Specifically, his empirical research impacted on our discussions about how to reconstruct overall HEIs curricula and reorganise students learning activities' (S2, translated).

Shifting understanding in the higher education sector on globalisation issues

Kariya's research has played a significant role in how leaders in the higher education sector are approaching issues of globalization. On 27 August 2018, he was invited by the President of Tsudajuku University to deliver a keynote speech at a symposium convened by the Association of Private Universities of Japan. This is one of the largest associations of Japanese private universities with 125 members consisting of high-ranking administrators (predominantly presidents or vice-presidents). Kariya's speech focusing on the globalization issues at the heart of his research, enlightened discussions about the possibility of more feasible university reforms. The President of Tsudajuku University stated in the post-conference publication that Kariya's research (in particular R2) had changed thinking within the Association and across the sector, as she confirms in her e-mail from September 2019:

'Top executives in private universities referred to his works on globalisation policies to understand the meaning of the [government's] policies. His research, based on cogent evidence in comparisons with UK HEIS, impacted on our report on 'How private universities can show their presence globally?' His delivered speech made us realise defects in government higher education policies, which are made with very limited evidence for policy making.' (S3, translated)

In the same email, she testifies to how the ideas set out in his book, *The warning bells from Oxford* [R2], have been disseminated within the community of university leaders:

'Kariya provided an insightful perspective that relativizes the perception of educational power inherent in the problems of accreditation and internal quality assurance that are being promoted

in Japanese universities under the guise of 'reform'. The conference was attended by members of the above-mentioned projects, as well as a number of senior university administrators, including presidents and vice-chancellors, who had read the book [R2]. The influence of the book was clearly evident here as well' (S3, translated).

Universities are now taking steps to put these recommendations into practice. For example, Kariya was invited to give a keynote speech at a symposium convened by the Kyoto University Research Administrations Office, where the (then) President of the University attended. The symposium held on 16 March 2018 was entitled the 'Future of Humanities and Social Sciences: How research assessment schemes can contribute to further development of research'. A total of 141 researchers and staff from inside and outside the university, as well as members of the media participated. Of these attendees, 55 were from beyond Kyoto, including from Hokkaido and Okinawa (S4) provinces. The keynote speech was based on Kariya's research [R2, R3], and in a discussion session after the presentation, participants, including the President, discussed the points made in the lecture. Testimony provided by the President indicates a number of subsequent reforms in his university that were influenced by Kariya's work, especially acknowledging the importance of using academic works in Japanese for globalising their teaching:

'Inspired by Prof Kariya's work, we designed our plan to establish 'Kyoto International Undergraduate Program (Kyoto IUP)' where we invite high school students from ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] countries. In that newly established programme, launched two years ago, according to Prof. Kariya's suggestion, we teach them Japanese language for the first half year, followed by classes taught in Japanese with Japanese students. His ideas also inspired us to build research collaborations with Japanese companies to create innovations by taking advantage of as well as making full use of the strengths of our Japanese language and culture'. (S5, translated)

Changing national reporting of education and globalization issues in the media

The monograph *The warning bells from Oxford* [R2] has sold c.23,500 copies nationally in Japan, and book reviews have been published not only in academic journals but also in major newspapers and popular magazines with a significant national circulation. These publications include the Asahi Shinbun Newspaper, the second largest newspaper company in Japan with approximately 5,600,000 daily readers. Asahi Shinbun have a monthly review section of the most influential articles and books, and they refer to Kariya's work on university education reforms on two occasions: once on 31 August 2017 and once on 15 December 2015 (S6a and S6b). In an e-mail statement, an Asahi editor confirms how Kariya's research has influenced their content production: 'Prof Kariya's work has provided influential views on higher education policies in Japan by relativizing our interpretations of the policies and has clarified the importance of discovering the strengths of Japanese universities in the global context' (S7, translated). Kariya also contributes a regular column for *Tokyo Keizai*, an equivalent of *The Economist* in the UK, where he often presents his research concerning issues of Japanese higher education. This popular weekly journal attracts approximately 90,000 subscribers from business, including executives in major Japanese companies.

The prominence of Kariya's research in the media has directly led to changes in how the Japanese government have designed their evidence base in support of education policies. In late April 2020, the Japanese government suddenly proposed to shift the academic year to start in September (rather than the traditional April start) in an attempt to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on schoolchildren's learning, due to the nationwide school closures in the spring of 2020. One of the cited advantages of this move was that it would bring Japan into line with Western nations' schooling timetables. This announcement led to Kariya organising a team to explore the possible consequences of this policy [R6]. The government had not publicly outlined any potentially adverse effects of this change, so as a counterpoint, Kariya's research was widely reported in major national newspapers. One article in Asahi reported on its front page: 'If Japan shifted to an academic year starting in September next year, it would face a shortage of 28,000 elementary

school teachers and cost local governments close to an additional JPY300,000,000,000 (USD2,800,000,000) in the first year, according to a study conducted by a group of seven experts led by Takehiko Kariya, professor in the Sociology of Japanese Society at Oxford University' (**S8**, translated). These newspaper articles became a '*game-changer*' in the policy debates (according to an Asahi article from 4 June 2020) by providing cogent empirical results to predict the side effects that this hasty policy change might cause (**S9**, translated).

In early June 2020, the government decided to postpone the policy without clarifying when this would be readdressed, suggesting, in the Japanese political context, that they are no longer planning to implement the proposed policy in the near future. Having seen some of his earlier media work in *Tokyo Keizai*, the Japanese Cabinet Office (and the Minister responsible for the Covid-19 response) invited Kariya to present his research. Presenting his analysis of a Cabinet Office survey undertaken in June 2020, Kariya argued that in order to have a full picture of the potential effect of a September start date on schools, different layers of data (from individual schools and municipality levels) needed to be collected in order to create a panel data set. In response, the Cabinet Office ordered a second survey, which was conducted and published in December 2020. Kariya's influence on the government's decision was confirmed by a Cabinet Office official whilst the survey was being prepared for publication:

'According to [Kariya's] suggestion, the Cabinet office has recently conducted the second Survey on the same issue in December 2020, in which the second survey data will be connected to the previous one as much as possible to achieve a panel data design' (**S10**, translated).

Kariya's media work has therefore directly led to an improvement in the government's ability to make future policy decisions based on the strongest possible evidence base.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

S1. Minutes from Working Group on the Promotion of Humanities and Social Sciences (2nd), Central Council of Education in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), 14 November 2018 (in Japanese)

S2. E-mail statement, former Vice-Minister of MEXT (in Japanese), 2019-2020.

S3. E-mail statement, President of Tsudajuku University, Association of Private Universities of Japan Board Member. (in Japanese), 2019-2020.

S4. Website. Kyoto University Research Office, event report 'Future of Humanities and Social Sciences: How research assessment schemes can contribute to further development of research' (Conference presentation) <https://www.kura.kyoto-u.ac.jp/act/337> (in Japanese), March 2018.

S5. E-mail statement from President of Kyoto University, September 19th 2019. (in Japanese)

S6. Media articles from *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper database (in Japanese):

a) 31st Aug 2017

b) 15 Dec 2015

S7. E-mail statement from Editor, *Asahi Shinbun* newspaper. (in Japanese), 2019-2020.

S8. Media article on Covid-19 study, *Asahi Shinbun*. (in English), 17 May 2020.

<http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/13381391>

S9. Media article - *Asahi Shinbun* Interview with Kariya. (in Japanese), 4 Jun 2020.

<https://www.asahi.com/articles/DA3S14500629.html>

S10. E-mail statement from Assistant Counsellor in charge of Economic and Social Systems Planning, Japanese Cabinet Office. (in Japanese), Dec 2020.