



Moral Education in the Japanese Tertiary Sector: Focusing on the Teaching of Morality and Business Studies

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	ABSTRACT
<p>2016 Research Leap/Inovatus Services Ltd. All rights reserved.</p> <p>DOI: 10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.45.3002 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.45.3002</p>	<p>A survey of moral education in the Japanese tertiary sector today reveals a shared conviction among a great number of professors that their institutions fail to provide students with moral guidance or offer courses where discussions of ethics or morality are central. Given that moral and ethical education is not especially common in the tertiary sector in our country, our universities can appear to be remarkably amoral institutions. Today, however, we find ourselves at a major turning point in moral education generally. It has not been a school subject since World War II, but in 2016 the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology decided that it will be “special subject” in the next national curriculum; so new moral education classes will start in elementary schools in the 2018-2019 school year, and in junior high schools in the 2019-2020 school year. This initiative has, however, created unease among teachers in charge of moral education, in part at least because they feel unprepared to implement it. They are looking for help here to Japanese universities, but these have neither academic departments nor courses solely devoted to scholarship or instruction in the area of moral studies. The narrow, if important, problem of teacher training offers us a good opportunity to consider the place of moral education in the entire higher education sector. Obviously its role in Japan’s universities should not be restricted to preparing students wishing to become schoolteachers. It is equally vital for those who require an appropriate understanding of morals when they join the business sector, which is already engaging with business ethics and CSR. We are working to respond to this need, and I will describe some of the initiatives in this field that we are now implementing at Reitaku University, notably in our teaching of morality and business studies.</p>
<p>Keywords: Moral Education, Teaching of Morality, Business Studies, Japanese tertiary sector, junior high schools</p>	

1. Introduction

For all of us involved in higher education, the study of morality and ethics, especially in connection with economics and business, is vital, indeed indispensable, not least because morality and true achievement are causally connected. In this paper, I will seek to illustrate this connection by focusing on moral education in the Japanese tertiary sector where, I am convinced, we now find ourselves at a major turning point that has profound implications for moral education generally in my country.

2. Recent Gloss on Moral Education in Japan

Japanese educators have no choice to rethink moral education in the tertiary sector at the present time, for reasons that are in part domestic. An educational initiative being promoted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology stipulates that moral education is to become a

“special subject” in the next national curriculum; new moral education classes will start in elementary schools in the 2018-2019 school year, and in junior high schools in the 2019-2020 school year. It is obvious that this MEXT initiative was partly motivated by a strong sense of concern about Japan’s demographic challenges, most notably the incipient population decline. In addition to the proportion of people of working age decreasing sharply in the future, the birthrate is also well below replacement level, so that Japan is aging fast while life expectancy continues to increase. Given all this, the Japanese government has naturally come under pressure to devise urgent remedial measures. These include: raising the retirement age from 65; encouraging those, such as housewives, who are not formally in the labor market to participate in it; and enhancing the competencies of all potential workers. From the viewpoint of moral education, it is this last mentioned item that is especially significant, since it promises to make the role of higher education even more important than before¹.

¹ In promoting the cause of moral education in elementary and junior high schools MEXT makes frequent use of two sets of research findings in

particular: one is Fundamental Morals and Social Success by Kazuo Nishimura and others; the second is work by J.J. Heckman, such as his Giving Kids a Fair Chance (2013), and others who adopt an economic approach. The

Despite strong official backing, though, the new system for elementary and junior high schools has not necessarily been welcomed by those responsible for teaching the subject. This is partly because, since World War II, moral education has not been a clearly defined school subject, but merely a nominal program (“an hour of morals”). This has already created serious difficulties for the teacher training programs that Japanese universities offer, since these institutions have neither academic departments nor faculty solely devoted to scholarship or instruction in the area of moral studies. As a result, they have not to date produced researchers and educators specializing in the subject in sufficient numbers. This paucity of provision for moral education in teacher training programs in the Japanese tertiary sector has inevitably done considerable harm to the provision of moral education in elementary and junior high schools.³

3. The Place of Morality in a University Education

Considering the importance of the role that education is now expected to play in Japan’s future, the problem of moral education in the Japanese tertiary sector must be set in a wider context than the narrow, if important, domestic issue of teacher training in Japan. Here, interestingly, we can find similar problems involving moral education in much broader academic fields and in a wide array of countries.

To illustrate this, we can cite some remarks about the place of morality and ethics in a university education by the political scientist, John Mearsheimer. In *Debating Moral Education* Elizabeth Kiss and J. Peter Euben drew attention to Mearsheimer’s very interesting 1997 address to the incoming 1st year class at the University of Chicago on the “Aims of Education”. Mearsheimer argued that the purpose of a university education was “to help students think critically, to broaden their intellectual horizons, and to promote greater awareness” (Kiss & Euben ed. 2010, p. 3-4). For him, this meant that a university that only aimed to develop its students’ knowledge, abilities and expertise, but did not provide them with “moral guidance” or offer courses where they could “discuss ethics or morality”, was “a remarkably amoral institution”.

This raises a fundamental question; are such amoral institutions really equipped to offer a university education in the 21st century, an age that needs to reacquire itself with the universal

ideas of sustainability, of life as a “going concern”, and of the common good? For if students are to understand the true nature of sustainability, for example, they must inevitably confront questions of ethics and morality. That being so, we must identify the kinds of university courses that most readily invite the discussion of such questions.

4. Accounting Scandals and their Impact on Business Studies Education

In this context we may recall a number of recent accounting scandals in the USA, such as that which broke in 2001 and eventually led to the bankruptcy of the Enron Corporation, an American energy company based in Houston, Texas, or that which brought down WorldCom, the Nation’s second largest long distance telecommunications company, after it was revealed in 2002. The illusion of Enron’s reputed financial health was sustained largely by an institutionalized, systematic, and creatively planned accounting fraud, while WorldCom overstated its earnings in 2001 and the first quarter of 2002 by more than \$3.8 billion⁴.

These scandals could not fail to have had an impact on those responsible for teaching business administration or management. For example, Clayton M. Christensen, the Kim B. Clark Professor at Harvard Business School, described one of his classmates, Jeffrey Skilling, who “had landed in jail for his role in the Enron scandal”, as exhibiting in the process “personal dissatisfaction, family failures, personal struggles, even criminal behavior” (Christensen and et al. 2012, p.3). These problems were not, according to Christensen, limited to his classmates at HBS⁵. But rather than accepting that personal factors alone cause such immorality, George Hara argued that the above-mentioned accounting scandals revealed much deeper problems about American corporate governance in general:

The American way of corporate governance has this way of thinking as its key point that “companies belong to their shareholders”. In the final analysis, it comes down to the idea that the sole aim of a company is to raise its value for its shareholders, namely “to raise stock price”. One of the biggest reasons for the scandals of the Enron Corporation and WorldCom is that the prevailing trend of regarding the raising of the company’s profits in a short time-frame as an excellent business administration has become strongest to the utmost limit (Hara 2013, p. 46).

former reveals that Japanese adults who were taught four moral principles tend to make value judgments that are better in terms of sociality. It lists these four principles as follows: 1) Be honest, 2) Be kind to others, 3) Observe the rules, and 4) Keep learning. It also compares the yearly income of adults who were taught all four moral principles and those who were taught only some, or none, of them. This shows that those who were taught all the principles earned about 570,000 yen (about \$5000) more than those who were only taught some, and about 860,000 yen (about \$7600) more than those who were not taught any of them (Nishimura and et al., 2014, pp. 1-22).

² In Japanese universities, courses on the “methods of teaching morals”, a required subject in teacher-training programs, are sometimes offered by faculty who are not specialists in moral education. Such courses, which are supposed to provide students with a comprehensive grasp of the objects, contents and methods of moral education, attract just two credits for one 90 minutes class per week for fifteen weeks.

³ In order to cope with this situation, Reitaku University’s Graduate School has established a Masters Course in Moral Education in 2018, for both existing and aspiring teachers who wish to deepen their academic and scientific understanding of moral education. It will be the first and only graduate MA course on moral education in Japan, other than the graduate programs in moral education offered by Tsukuba University and Osaka Kyoiku University.

⁴ It should be acknowledged that Japan is far from immune here; the same kinds of accounting frauds have also been found in leading Japanese companies.

⁵ In his final lecture, he asked the following questions: How can I be sure that I will be successful and happy in my career? That my relationships with my spouse, my children, and my extended family and close friends become an enduring source of happiness? That I live a life of integrity—and stay out of jail? (*Ibid.*, p.6)

The technique employed in these instances was to engage in window-dressing the accounts to make the company's business results look good and so inflate its share price. Underlying such examples of willful corporate fraud and corruption, we can detect a shareholder-centric attitude and an obsession with short-term profit making. Long-lasting Japanese enterprises, by contrast, cannot afford to indulge in such narrow and ephemeral ways of thinking, as we will now illustrate.

5. Japanese Corporate Governance and Morality

To highlight this contrast, let us compare the American model of corporate governance with the Japanese one found in its most long-lived companies. In Japan, almost all enterprises think much more in terms of long-range business management goals than short-term ones. Rather than viewing their companies as belonging only to their shareholders, they also pay a great deal of attention to various other stakeholders, including their employees, business partners, and customers.

The best examples here are Japanese enterprises that are more than 200 years old. Though long-lived enterprises are also found elsewhere in the world, Japan is the country with the largest number of such companies. According to one survey, there are 7212 long-lived companies distributed across 57 countries. Japan leads the way with 3113 such companies, followed by Germany with 1563, and then France with 331 (Goto 2009, p.91). Even in Japan, though, such enterprises are exceptionally noteworthy, since according to the Small and Medium Enterprise Agency, 30 percent of enterprises close down less than 10 years after their foundation, while 50 percent survive less than 20 years (Tamiya 2016, p. 82).

Expanding the criteria for long-lived enterprises to include those established at least 100 years ago, several common traits can be discerned. In August 2010, Teikoku Databank Ltd., in a survey of 1,300,000 companies in Japan, found that these included 22,219 long-lived companies that had endured for over 100 years. The five oldest enterprises in Japan were: Kongo Gumi Co., Ltd, the oldest, a wooden building industry founded in 578 (A.D.); Ikenobo- Kadokai, in second place, a school of ikebana (flower arranging) founded in 587; the third to fifth placed were Nishiyama Hot Spring Keiunkan, founded in 705, Koman, founded in 717 and Zengoro founded in 718, all of which are inns or hotels (Teikoku Databank Ltd. 2009, p. 50- 53).

One very interesting characteristic common to long-lived Japanese enterprises in general is that there are many more

small and medium-sized enterprises than large ones among them⁶. Scale, however, is not necessarily a condition for a business to enjoy longevity, as is apparent in Japan today, where 1.27 million small and medium-sized enterprises are faced with the prospect of closing down due to a lack of successors, even though they enjoy a current account surplus (Nippon Keizai Shinbun 2017, Oct. 6).

6. The Secret of Long-Lived Companies

Professor Kubota has offered two reasons why Japan has so many long-lived companies: one is the existence of traditional "family", which means that many companies started and developed from family business; the second is the fact that they have invested as much energy in preserving traditions as in innovating (Kubota 2010, p. 28-42). The preservation of traditions, evidence of what can be called unchanging management policies, includes: 1) a "customers come first" policy (not shareholders), which is sometimes explained as a focus on the "three-way satisfaction" of purchasers, buyers and society, with the aim of benefiting all of these parties; 2) a focus on the core business and on sound management practice, which means that they are not concerned either to diversify or to grow in size; 3) an emphasis on quality first, and the preservation of manufacturing methods; 4) viewing employees as important since, as is sometimes said, "a company is its people"; 5) the inheritance of a moral corporate philosophy, composed of written "explicit moral knowledge" such as family mottoes, or unwritten "tacit moral knowledge", or both. The latter include such moral business objectives as "maintaining high quality", "insisting on using good raw materials", "never cutting corners at work" and so on⁷. The strategy for innovation, a feature of flexible business management, includes: 1) providing products that meet the needs of the customer; 2) trying to keep one step ahead of the times; 3) making good use of sales channels such as IT; 4) accepting that establishing a new business entails reducing the core business; 5) adapting family mottoes to the times.

Let me take Kongo Gumi Co., Ltd., the oldest enterprise engaged in shrine and temple architecture in Japan. In the 6th century, the firm constructed the first ever Buddhist temple in Japan, namely Shitennoji in Osaka, which remains the oldest officially administered temple in Japan, although its buildings have been renewed over the centuries. According to Kenichi Tone, the president of Kongo Gumi, the secret of his company's longevity lies in its inheritance of a moral corporate philosophy, in the forms of both "explicit moral knowledge" and "tacit moral knowledge", as well as in a management approach that preserves manufacturing methods and handles human resources

⁶ If we categorise long-lasting companies by type of business, we find the following clusters: Retail businesses (6279 companies which sell Buddhist altar fittings, liquor, *kimono* fabric, and so on, accounting for 28.3% of the total); Manufacturing companies (5447 companies which manufacture Buddhist altar fittings, *sake* liquor, sweets and so on, 24.5%); Wholesale businesses (5216, 23.5%); Building industry (1975, 8.9%); Service industries (1893, 8.5%); Real estate businesses (745, 3.4%); Transportation and communication companies (272, 1.2%); Others (392, 1.8%).

⁷ Even today this tendency is evident in the research findings of the corporate credit research organisation, Teikoku Databank Research. It chose 4000

companies established before 1912, and using a systematic random sampling method, asked them, "What is the most important quality in a long-established enterprise that can be expressed in a single Chinese character?" Of the 814 answers received, the most valued qualities were: 1) First, "信", which means "trust", "reliance"; 2) Second, "誠", meaning "good faith", "trustworthiness"; 3) Third, 繼 continuity, succession; 4) Fourth, 心 heart, conscience; 5) Fifth, 真 sincerity, truth (Teikoku Databank Ltd. 2009, pp.18-21). All of these are traditional Japanese moral virtues.

effectively, for example by choosing successive presidents on the basis of ability rather than family connections. Tacit moral knowledge is evident in the company mind-set that emphasises that “we should not make too much profit” and “we do not cut corners at work”, since we have inherited the spirit of serving the gods and Buddha.

In 2006, however, this company experienced a financial crisis. According to Tone, it had tried to grow in size by engaging in more general architectural projects rather than focusing on its core business and found itself caught up in price competition. It had not obeyed the last will and testament, “Instruction of the family of artisans”, of Kijyo Kongo, the 32nd president, who enjoined its management not “to attempt more than your strength” (the spirit of the golden mean), but to focus on the core business of shrine and temple architecture (Kongo 2013, p.79- 80). The Takamatsu Construction Group, however, saved Kongo Gumi Co., Ltd. and incorporated it as part of the Group, recognizing its credibility as well as the value of the traditional expertise and skills handed down over more than 1400 years.

7. Reitaku’s Challenges

Reitaku is responding proactively to the demand for moral education in the tertiary sector. This is reflected both in our curriculum, which is based on our fundamental mission as a university, and in our strong encouragement of student involvement in community and volunteer activities. Due to limitations of space, I will focus on our mission and explain how this informs some of the distinctive courses we offer, especially in the Department of Economics.

First, then, our mission. This is based on the scholarship and philosophy of our university’s founder, Chikuro Hiroike (1866–1938), a scholar and educator who published his *Treatise on Moral Science: A First Attempt to Establish Morality as a New Science*⁸ in 1928. Well aware of the relationship between morality and economic matters, he advocated the need to harmonise them, mentioning for instance that “starting an enterprise will always be successful temporarily but when one is successful and tries to maintain the enterprise in good condition, higher morality is required to one’s fortune and social position” (Hiroike 2002, vol. III, p.464). In addition to his many academic achievements, he engaged in practical work aimed at solving labor problems, and tried to improve business management in commerce and industry by the infusing a concern for morality into his social contemporaries.

His spirit and writings, which continue to play a central role in our university’s life, were imbued with the firm belief that education should provide students not just academic knowledge, but also a high level of integrity and moral character. To develop and apply his moral philosophy and his guiding spirit in the sphere of higher education, we have established two dedicated centers: R-pec (the Reitaku University Business Ethics and Compliance Research Center);

and CMSE (the Center for Moral Science and Education). R-pec’s mission is to promote research into business ethics, compliance, and risk management, in an unceasing search for a code of conduct that meets the needs both of individuals and society as a whole. CMSE, on the other hand, aims to contribute on a broad front to the promotion of moral education in both the university and society by conducting education and research in Moralogy, the moral science that forms our university’s spiritual foundation (Nakayama 2015).

All of this informs the curriculum of our Department of Economics in the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration. One example is the “integration of morality and economy course” we offer. Table 1 below outlines its structure.

Table 1

Subject	Compulsory/Elective	Year	Start Year
Modern Society and Moral Science	Compulsory	1st Year	2016
Moral Science	Compulsory	2nd Year	2016
Economic Ethics	Elective	3rd / 4th Year	2012
Business Ethics	Elective	3rd / 4th Year	2012
Study of Moral Science	Elective	3rd / 4th Year	
Practice in the Integration of Morality and Economy I/II	Elective	3rd Year	2018
Practice in the Integration of Morality and Economy III/IV	Elective	4th Year	2018
Advanced Course of Moral Management	Elective	3rd / 4th Year	2018

Let me focus on two of these courses. “Moral Science” is a year-long, 30 week course consisting of one 90 minute class per week. Our CMSE implements it as a core element of the complete moral education offered by our university, and it is also a main subject in the general- education component across our undergraduate program, being compulsory for all second year students.

⁸ A three-volume English translation of the Japanese original is also available under the title, *Towards Supreme Morality: An Attempt to Establish the New Science of Moralogy*, 2002, The Institute of Moralogy.

“Modern Society and Moral Science” is also a year-long, 30 week course, especially for the students of the Department of Economics. It has the following five units: the basics of economic ethics and business ethics; morality and economy in the present age; social philosophy and CSR; ethical decision making in a corporation; the environment and morality. This course elucidates the significance of Hiroike’s Moralogy for today’s society in the specialized area of economics, and includes a student assessment in the form of a questionnaire. The results of this appear in the charts below. In one assessment period, for example, 246 students of a total of 307 enrolled students responded to the questionnaire, which has two parts. The items were graded on a 5 level scale, with 5 being the highest and 1 the lowest. Chart 1 is an overall assessment of the course, with the average score being 4.1 on one question, and just below 4 for the remainder. Chart 2 illustrates students’ comprehension of the course content, with the average score being 4 for two items and just below 4 for the remainder.

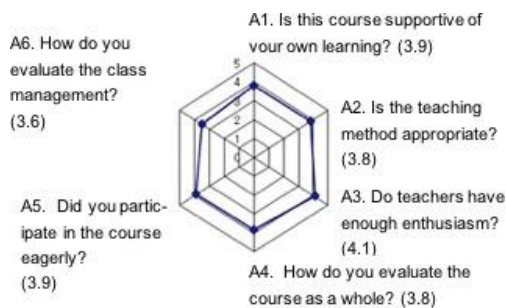


Figure 1: An Overall Assessment of the Course

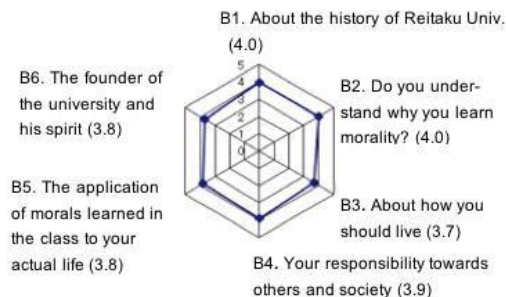


Figure 2: Students’ Comprehension of the Course Contents

Though the average scores may be said to have been relatively high, we realize that the outcomes of the university’s moral education program cannot be measured by this questionnaire alone, and that they are not simply a reflection of this course alone⁹. So, as mentioned above, to spur the development of

important moral competencies, we offer our students various educational programs of the PBL type and strongly encourage them to become involved in community and volunteer efforts.

Let me conclude by detailing how we are trying to extend this work by participating in various international collaborative projects in the tertiary sector. The MOU between the Center for Character and Social Responsibility, a division of the School of Education at Boston University, and our own CMSE gave rise to a collaborative effort that bore fruit in the publication of *Happiness and Virtue beyond East and West: Toward a New Global Responsibility* in 2012. Another MOU, this time between Reitaku and Missouri University of St. Louis, has resulted in a collaborative endeavor to develop tools to measure the impact of moral education. In Great Britain, too, we have concluded an MOU with the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham, which is making admirable efforts to reconstruct Aristotelian Character Education through academic research. We have supported their work by producing a Japanese translation of Professor Kristjánsson’s *Aristotelian Character Education*. Much more remains to be done, of course, and we are fully aware that, in this globalized age, we must build on such initiatives and seize the future by participating in collaborative academic and educational initiatives worldwide. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the emerging global trend of promoting moral education in the tertiary sector¹⁰.

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⁹ As Berkowitz and Bier note in this regard, “the outcomes of effective character education are a complex set of psychological characteristics that motivate and enable one to function as a moral agent” (Berkowitz & Bier 2007, p.30)

¹⁰ In 2013, for example, Reitaku students participated in volunteer activities during the semester in the following locations: 1) welfare facilities including nursing homes, terminal care centers, juvenile asylums in Japan and rehabilitation facilities in foreign countries (Thailand and Laos), 2) educational institutions including Japanese Schools in a foreign country (Thailand), and schools for handicapped children in Japan, 3) relief activities including reconstruction activities in the areas affected by the March 11,

2011, disaster. To spur the development of important moral competencies, we offer our students various educational programs of the PBL type. These allow them to engage with moral issues in the real world, since we recognize the need both to promote experience-based formats such as student involvement in community and volunteer efforts, and to shed more light on the positive impact that these programs can have on the psychological development of our students. In 2017, we introduced a brand new subject of the PBL type, called the “Reitaku-Community Cooperation Workshop”. This class is an educational collaboration with Kashiwa city, where our university is located, designed to allow our students to participate in actual projects that the City is engaged in. Students conduct investigations and formulate plans, as well as thinking hard about how to solve the problems of the local community

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