

Title	The emergence of women's higher education in Japan, with special attention to the Japan Women's College
Sub Title	日本における女子高等教育の誕生： 日本女子大学校のケースに焦点をあてて
Author	富田, 裕子(Tomida, Hiroko)
Publisher	慶應義塾大学日吉紀要刊行委員会
Publication year	2021
Jtitle	慶應義塾大学日吉紀要. 人文科学 (The Hiyoshi review of the humanities). No.36 (2021.) ,p.217- 244
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	
Genre	Departmental Bulletin Paper
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN10065043-20210630-0217

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The Emergence of Women's Higher Education in Japan, with Special Attention to the Japan Women's College

Hiroko Tomida

Introduction

After the collapse of the Tokugawa regime, responsibility for state administration returned to the Emperor in 1868, and various measures were taken to lift many feudal restrictions. With the abolition of feudal customs and the introduction of new rules to modernise society, some constraints on women were altered. Their social status was at a low ebb in the Edo period. For example, women's sphere of activity was slightly extended, and customs affecting them earlier began to die out. Although new pieces of legislation were enacted, none of them significantly upgraded women's status. The most important change for women after the Meiji Restoration was educational reform.

Although the educational reforms after the Meiji Restoration have been well researched in Japan, publications on these topics in English have been limited, mainly analysing the development of men's education and neglecting the field of women's education, especially women's higher education. Therefore more English articles and books on women's education in Japan are desperately needed. However, Tsuda Umeko, who founded the Women's Institute of English Studies, has been well-documented in English since she spent many years in America and

was fluent in English. Many English primary and secondary sources about her are available.⁽¹⁾

This article will be divided into two sections. In the first part, the article will give an overall picture of women's educational reforms after 1868. It will discuss the emergence and development of women's primary and secondary education, and then draw special attention to women's higher education. I would like to identify its origins, assessing how and why women's higher educational institutions were founded, and to survey their educational aims and policies. Among them, the Japan Women's College (Nihon Joshi Daigakkō) was the largest women's higher educational institution in Japan. In the second part of this article I will focus on that college, which was founded in 1901 by Naruse Jinzō. Although he was one of the leading educationalists in the Meiji and Taishō periods, there are hardly any publications in English written about him. Therefore his family and educational backgrounds will be introduced, explaining the reasons why he decided to establish the college. The article will also examine his educational ideas and policy of women's higher education, and discuss the college's key attributes such as students, staff, curriculum and other educational activities. Moreover, it will investigate major objectives and achievements of the college. What kinds of impact did the college have on Japanese society and women? What key roles did it play in enhancing women's education? These questions will be pursued in the article.

Part 1: Women's education before the Meiji Restoration in 1868

It is important to explain the education available to women in the Edo period first. In that period, there was a strict hierarchical class system, termed the *shi-nō-*

(1) On Tsuda Umeko, see Barbara Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education in Japan* (New Haven, 1992); Yoshiko Furuki, *The White Plum: A Biography of Ume Tsuda* (New York, 1991); Yoshiko Furuki et al. (eds), *The Attic Letters: Ume Tsuda's Correspondence to her American Mother* (New York, 1991).

kō-shō system, in which all people in Japan were divided into four classes: warriors, farmers, artisans and merchant traders. People's educational opportunities and lifestyles differed between the classes, but generally speaking women had far less educational chances than their male equivalents.⁽²⁾

Among the four classes, daughters of the merchants had the best opportunities to receive education outside their homes. This was because they were expected to help to run their fathers' and husbands' shops. Therefore many of them were sent to *terakoya* (temple schools) to learn basic skills such as the three Rs.⁽³⁾ They also received vocational training such as the use of the abacus at home. Lesser numbers of daughters of artisans studied the three Rs at temple schools. The great majority of women of the peasant class were illiterate because they had neither time nor money to acquire basic reading and writing.⁽⁴⁾ The daughters of the warrior class were normally educated at home by their mothers, grandmothers and other female relatives.⁽⁵⁾ Their education outside their homes was retarded while their brothers usually studied at domain schools or private academies or shogunal schools. The women of the warrior class were bound by the *ie* system and Neo-Confucian theories represented by Kaibara Ekken's teaching.⁽⁶⁾ Confucian teaching favoured separate and limited education for women, which led to ruling prejudices against such education. A popular saying in the Edo period – 'Onna was sai naki o motte tokuto suru' (Women without ability are considered to be virtuous) – highlighted this.⁽⁷⁾ Matsudaira Sadanobu, the Shōgun's Chancellor from 1786 to 1793,

(2) On education in the Edo period, see Tetsuya Kobayashi, *Society, Schools and Progress in Japan* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 11–22; Nobuo K. Shimahara, *Adaptation and Education in Japan* (New York, 1979), pp. 45–46.

(3) R. P. Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (1965, London, 1992 edn), p. 254.

(4) Itoya Toshio, *Meiji Ishin to Josei no Yoake* (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 20–28.

(5) Shibukawa Hisako, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi: Kyōiku* (Tokyo, 1970), p. 2.

(6) Fukuchi Shigetaka, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi* (Tokyo, 1977), pp. 11–12.

(7) Miyagi Eishō et al. (eds), *Shinkō Nihon Joseishi* (Tokyo, 1974), p. 171.

disapproved of raising the level of women's education:

It is perfectly acceptable that women should be unlettered. To cultivate women's skills would be harmful. They have no need of learning. It is more than enough if they can read books in *kana* (the Japanese syllabary alphabet). Let it be that way.⁽⁸⁾

Educated women were often considered impertinent and were likely to interfere in family affairs to an extent that might ruin their family. Such beliefs about women's education had wide public acquiescence. Women's academic education was characterised by an utter lack of opportunity and no encouragement from parents and officials of the Tokugawa Shōgunate.

Educational reforms after the Meiji Restoration

After the Meiji Restoration, the Meiji Constitution, the Shūgiin Giin Senkyo Hō (Electoral Law to choose members of the House of Representatives), and the Kizokuin Hō (The House of Peers' Act) were promulgated in 1889. In 1898 the Meiji Civil Code was enacted, and in 1900 the Chian Keisatsu Hō (the Peace Police Law) was passed. However, none of these provided women with any legal and political rights which helped to improve women's status. The only important change for women was the reform of the educational system.

The first experiment that the Meiji government took in 1871 to improve women's education was to send five girls to America to study as government-funded pupils, together with male students, as a part of the Iwakura Mission.⁽⁹⁾

(8) Herbert Passin, *Society and Education in Japan* (New York, 1965), p. 46. Matsudaïda Sadanobu's view of women's education is discussed in Dore, *Education in Tokugawa Japan*, p. 66; Robert L. Backus, 'Matsudaira Sadanobu and Samurai Education', in Andrew Gerstle (ed.), *18th Century Japan: Culture and Society* (North Sydney, 1989), pp. 132–148.

Kuroda Kiyotaka, who appreciated the close links between women's education and national development, advised the government to send girls to America to receive western education. Tsuda Umeko, the youngest of these five girls, later became one of the leading female educationalists in Japan, and founded Joshi Eigaku Juku (the Women's Institute of English Studies).

In 1872 the government promulgated the *Gakusei* (the Fundamental Education Law), which followed the French educational system. It laid stress upon the ways in which education would influence people's later lives. Its purpose was described as follows:

Learning is the key to success in life, and no man can afford to neglect it. It is ignorance that leads man astray, makes him destitute, disrupts his family, and in the end destroys his/her life... Every man should therefore pursue learning; and in so doing he should not misconstrue its purpose. Accordingly, the Department of Education will soon establish an educational system and will revise the regulations relating thereto from time to time; wherefore there shall, in the future, be no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person. Every guardian, acting in accordance with this, shall bring up his children with tender care, never failing to have them attend school. While advanced education is left to the ability and means of the individual, a guardian who fails to send a young child, whether a boy or a girl, to primary school shall be deemed negligent of his duty.⁽⁹⁾

(9) Karasawa Tomitarō, *Joshi Gakusei no Rekishi* (Tokyo, 1979), pp. 8–11; Letter from Kaitakushi to Tsuda Umeko entitled 'Monjo Kaitakushi Reisho' (November, 1872), Archives of Tsuda Juku Daigaku.

(10) Passin, *Society and Education in Japan*, pp. 210–211.

The Fundamental Education Law introduced compulsory elementary education regardless of sex and class for the first time in Japan. Indeed it extended female educational opportunities, and gave girls the right to receive a compulsory elementary school education equal to that for boys, guaranteeing a girl full educational equality at elementary school. This was a radical departure from women's education in the Edo period, which had placed stress upon obedience and self-abnegation.

It is worth considering why such a revolutionary educational law was introduced by the government. Some of the new leaders such as Mori Arinori and Iwakura Tomomi, had been to western countries, and after returning to Japan, they became convinced that the key to modernise Japan was the education of both men and women, as was occurring in the west. They believed that the development of such education would recruit a wider pool of talented people, and thus accelerate Japan's advancement and industrialisation.⁽¹¹⁾ Through their overseas experience, they had also become aware of American and British women's relatively high social status, and the responsibilities accorded them. They felt that the education of western women made them good companions to their husbands, and that this was crucial vis-à-vis children's education at home – the latter being an essential element in the formation of a modern nation.⁽¹²⁾ They were convinced also that much would depend upon the education of the next generation of mothers. How to proceed in public policy was not however an easy matter for them. Because of their strong recommendations, the Japanese government, coming to realise the importance of education, especially for girls, introduced the Fundamental Education Law.

The government also introduced a policy of increasing the number of publicly funded elementary schools, and by 1875 the total number of the such schools throughout Japan exceeded 24,200.⁽¹³⁾ In spite of such governmental attempts to

(11) Fujii Chie & Kanamori Toshie, *Onna no Kyōiku 100-nen* (Tokyo, 1977), p. 18.

(12) Fukuchi, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi*, pp. 31–32.

improve women's educational standards, the result was unrewarding because female elementary attendance rates remained very low compared with those of western countries such as America and Britain. Even in 1892 the female attendance rate in Japan was only 36.5 percent, which was much lower than the male equivalent, the latter being 71.7 percent in the same year.⁽¹⁴⁾ It was most regrettable that girls' elementary school attendance rates did not rise much for the next 25 years after the enactment of the Fundamental Education Law. Women's literacy rates remained much lower than those of men.

There are many reasons for this. The great majority of Japanese people had been so accustomed to the conventional fixed idea of female education, as represented by Matsudaira Sadanobu, that they were very reluctant to send their daughters even to elementary school. The Fundamental Education Law, which was based on the French educational system and included elements of western liberal ideals, could not easily fit Japanese society since it was regarded as highly idealistic, and had little to do with Japanese ways of thinking in many regards. The curricula of elementary school education focused on a wide range of academic learning, but many parents thought that highly academic subjects would be of no use to girls. They wanted schools to provide their daughters with practical training such as sewing, but the schools failed to meet their requirements expectations.⁽¹⁵⁾ Moreover, even compulsory elementary school education was not free at that time, so parents had to pay their children's tuition fees.⁽¹⁶⁾ Poor parents could not afford to send their children, especially daughters, to school. There were also parents who disliked the idea of co-education. Because of the above reasons, girls' elementary school attendance rates did not rise easily.

(13) Shibukawa, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi: Kyōiku*, p. 16.

(14) Karasawa, *Joshi Gakusei no Rekishi*, p. 11.

(15) *Ibid.*, p. 12.

(16) Katayama Kiyoichi, *Kindai Nihon no Joshi Kyōiku* (Tokyo, 1984), p. 27.

By 1890s the Japanese government had become concerned that westernising trends had become too powerful, and took the initiative in enforcing the Kyōiku Chokugo (the Imperial Rescript on Education) in 1890.⁽¹⁷⁾ Its contents were largely based on Confucianism, and its ultimate goal of school education was to recruit a nation which would obey the emperor unconditionally and regard obedience to him as the highest virtue. Prior to its implementation, the western influence had an impact of the development of women's education in many ways, enhancing the level of female culture. However, the Imperial Rescript on Education based on patriotic teaching changed thereafter, into the '*ryōsai kenbo shugi kyōiku*' (education for making good wives and wise mothers).⁽¹⁸⁾

Under this new educational policy, manners, discipline, home-making and domestic training were seen as far more important in women's education than academic training. To meet the main objectives of the Imperial Rescript on Education, the Ministry of Education redesigned the elementary school curriculum, in which subjects such as sewing, cooking, singing and music lessons were given emphasis. After the promulgation of the Rescript in 1890, girls' elementary school attendance rates began to rise, and in 1897 they exceeded 50 percent, finally reaching 90 percent by 1904.⁽¹⁹⁾

Women's secondary education in the Meiji period

Secondary education was still considered as very much a boy's privilege in the Meiji period, and girls were discouraged from going to high school by their parents. In addition, the number of girls' high schools in Japan was very limited. There were two kinds of girls' high schools which were private and public. The former was

(17) Monbushō (comp.), *Gakusei 120-nen-shi* (Tokyo, 1992), pp. 22–23.

(18) On '*ryōsai kenbo*', see Kathleen S. Uno, 'The Death of "Good Wife, Wise Mother"?', in Andrew Gordon (ed.), *Postwar Japan as History* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 293–303; Haga Noboru, *Ryōsai Kenboron* (Tokyo, 1990), p. 8.

(19) Monbushō (comp.), *Gakusei 80-nen-shi* (Tokyo, 1954), pp. 1036–1037.

dominated by *misshon sukūru* (missionary girls' high schools). Beginning with Ferris Jogakkō (Ferris Women's Seminary), founded by the American missionary Mary Kidder (1834–1910) in 1875, about thirty missionary girls' high schools had been established by the end of the nineteenth century. These greatly enhanced the standard of women's secondary education.⁽²⁰⁾

Ōe Sumi, a pioneering educationalist in the field of modern domestic science in Japan, had studied at Tōyō Eiwa Girls' High School, a mission school created in 1884 by Martha J. Cartmell, a Methodist missionary from Canada.⁽²¹⁾ Ōe stated that she was stimulated by the Christian belief that in the eyes of God everybody is equal.⁽²²⁾ The school gave her an ideal opportunity to improve her English, and she was successful in mastering advanced-level English. Her close contacts with her foreign teachers, who were dedicated Christians, helped to broaden her outlook. She benefitted enormously from her education at this missionary school.

Compared to the rapid expansion of the missionary girls' high schools, the development of female public high schooling was very slow in the early and mid Meiji era. Although Tokyo Jogakkō (Tokyo Girls' High School), the first national girls' high school to be subsidised by the Ministry of Education, was founded in 1872, only eight more national and prefectural girls' high schools had been established by 1885, when Kazoku Jogakkō (Peeresses' High School) was set up.⁽²³⁾ However, the number of girls' public schools increased after 1899, up to 52 in 1900

(20) Suzuki Minako et al. (eds), *Ferris Jogakuin 110-nen Shōshi* (Yokohama, 1982), pp. 3–17; Ferris Jogakuin (ed.), *Kidder Shokanshū: Nihon Saisho no Joshi Kyōikusha no Kiroku* (Yokohama, 1970), pp. 43–79.

(21) Tōyō Eiwa Jogakuin 100-nen-shi Hensan Jikkō Linkai (ed.), *Tōyō Eiwa Jogakuin 100-nen-shi* (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 136–138.

(22) Ōe Sumi, 'Watashi no Ayunde Kita Michi', in Tokyo Kasei Gakuin, *Sōritsusha Ōe Sumi Sensei* (Tokyo, 1974), p. 7.

(23) 'Kanritsu Jogakkō Secchi ni Kansuru Monbushō Futatsu' (December, 1871), reprint-ed in Mitsui Reiko (ed.), *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei*, Vol. 4 (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 142–144.

and 70 in 1901.⁽²⁴⁾ This was due to the promulgation of the Kōtō Jogakkō Rei (Girls' High School Act) in 1899. Under this act, the Ministry of Education stipulated that each prefectural government must set up more than one girls' high school.⁽²⁵⁾

The girls' secondary schools, which were funded by the government and under the control of the Ministry of Education, adopted government-approved education to produce 'good wives and wise mothers'. Consequently at girls' secondary schools students' freedom was suppressed, and the schools hindered the growth of spontaneous expression. Their curricula followed educational guidelines in the Girls' High School Act.⁽²⁶⁾ The subject which was regarded as the most important for girls was *shūshin* (morals), which was the core education to create 'good wives and wise mothers'. The contents of the *shūshin* textbooks were edifying stories about two types of women: one being eminent female figures such as Empress Shōken, Kasuga no Tsubone and Empress Kōmyō; the other being wives and mothers of male historical figures whose success was owing to these women, like Toyotomi Hideyoshi's wife or Yamanouchi Kazutoyo's wife.⁽²⁷⁾ The textbooks sang the praises of women who were diligent, thrifty and virtuous, who supported their husbands and sons. Practical subjects such as housekeeping, sewing, handicrafts and etiquette, thought to be extremely useful for domestic life, were given higher priority than academic subjects such as mathematics, Japanese, Chinese literature and English, although these topics were also taught.

Hiratsuka Raichō, who had attended Ochanomizu Girls' High School, a public school funded by the Ministry of Education, recalled that the atmosphere of the school was authoritarian, and pervaded by a sense of catering for elite students.⁽²⁸⁾

(24) Katayama, *Kindai Nihon no Joshi Kyōiku*, pp. 89–90.

(25) 'Kōtō Jogakkō Rei', *Chokurei*, 31 (8 February, 1899), reprinted in Mitsui (ed.), *Nihon Fujin Mondai Shiryō Shūsei*, Vol. 4, pp. 262–263.

(26) *Ibid.*, pp. 262–263.

(27) Haga, *Ryōsai Kenboron*, pp. 19–20.

(28) Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi Josei wa Taiyō de Atta: Hiratsuka Raichō Jiden*, Vol. 1

Many teachers there gave a formalistic education based on Confucian and 'feudal' principles, and their teaching methods were formal and inflexible. She gave the following descriptions of the typical teaching by one of the teachers, Mrs Yahagi Tetsu:

Yahagi taught us all the subjects of study perfunctorily, following the textbooks provided. She made us learn all the information in the textbooks off by heart. She never gave us extra reading lists. She did not even bother to encourage students to read books other than the textbooks. Her teaching method neither made us think for ourselves, nor gave us an opportunity to think carefully. What was worse, it never roused our interest in study. Yahagi taught us Japanese, mathematics, history, geography, science and a couple of other subjects.⁽²⁹⁾

Hiratsuka criticised Yahagi's classes for being dull and unimaginative, lacking a good rapport between a teacher and pupils. She concluded that her studies had been monotonous and lacking in intellectual stimulation. She particularly disliked the compulsory *shūshin* classes, which asked students to read aloud textbooks written in classical Japanese, and to listen to teachers' translations. The classes did not give students any opportunity to ask questions, or comment on the women they studied.⁽³⁰⁾ Hiratsuka felt like a little bird in a small cage, about to suffocate at her school which hedged in students by strict school regulations and education to make 'good wives and wise mothers'.⁽³¹⁾ With regard to missionary schools, an education for making 'good wives and wise mothers' was not practised there, and equality of

(Tokyo, 1971), p. 83.

(29) Ibid., p. 82.

(30) Ibid., p. 82.

(31) Hiratsuka Raichō, *Watakushi no Aruita Michi* (1955, Tokyo, 1994 edn), p. 31.

the sexes existed, allowing girls more independence of mind.

Women's higher education in the Meiji period

It was extremely rare for women in the Meiji period to study at higher education level. The number of educational institutions which could offer women higher education was very limited. No national and private universities admitted women as degree students. They did not even allow women to sit in some classes as non-degree occasional students. Yamakawa Kikue recalled her bitter disappointment and frustration when her request to sit in psychology classes at Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University) was blocked by the Faculty Board.⁽³²⁾ It was not until the beginning of the Taishō period that a few universities began to open their doors to women.

Before 1900 there had been no women's higher education institutions in Japan, apart from Tokyo Joshi Kōtō Shihan Gakkō (Tokyo Women's Teachers' Training College), which is Ochanomizu Women's University now. The main objective of the college was to train female secondary school teachers, and it produced pioneering educationalists such as Ōe Sumi (a leader in the field of domestic science and the founder of Tokyo Kasei Gakuin) and Yasui Tetsu (the second president of Tokyo Women's Christian University).⁽³³⁾

In 1900 three more women's higher educational institutions were established, which were Joshi Eigaku Juku (the Women's Institute of English Studies), Tokyo Joi Gakkō (Tokyo Women's Medical College), and Joshi Bijutsu Gakkō (the Women's Art College).⁽³⁴⁾ All of them had a specific objective and provided students with a narrow specialised education. The Women's Institute of English Studies was started by Tsuda Umeko who had been sent to America with the Iwakura Mission

(32) Yamakawa Kikue, *Onna Nidai no Ki* (1972, Tokyo, 1987 edn), pp. 136–137.

(33) Fujii & Kanamori, *Onna no Kyōiku 100-nen*, p. 35.

(34) Shibukawa, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi: Kyōiku*, p. 47.

in 1871 at the age of six, and received both a school and university education there. Naturally she spoke English like a native speaker and had a deep understanding of western cultures. As she had also much experience of teaching English at the Peeresses' School, her Women's Institute of English Studies gave high priority to English language teaching.⁽³⁵⁾

Tokyo Women's Medical College was established by Yoshioka Yayoi, who graduated from the Saisei Gakusha School of Medicine (Nihon Ika University now) and received the 27th medical licence granted to a woman in Japan. Saisei Gakusha School of Medicine began to refuse women's entry on the grounds that discipline among the female students had broken down. Realising the difficulty of this career path for women in Japan, Yoshioka decided to start her own school of medicine to train female medical doctors.⁽³⁶⁾

The Women's Art College was set up by Yokoi Tamako since female students were not admitted to enter Tokyo University of Arts until 1946. It was the first fine art institution for female students in Japan. The main objectives were to develop creative minds, encouraging students to contribute to local and national societies. It also wanted to help women to become independent and to improve women's social status through fine art. It provided students with artistic training and aimed to produce qualified art teachers and creative artists.⁽³⁷⁾

In 1901 Nihon Joshi Daigakkō was founded by Naruse Jinzō. Some more women's vocational colleges and teachers' training colleges were set up towards the end of the Meiji period. However, none of these was given university status,

(35) Yamazaki Takako, *Tsuda Umeko* (1962, Tokyo, 1988 edn), p. 179; Rose, *Tsuda Umeko and Women's Education*, pp. 126–127; Furuki, *The White Plum*, pp. 98–100.

(36) On Yoshioka Yayoi, see Yoshioka Yayoi, *Yoshioka Yayoi Jiden* (Tokyo, 1998); Watanabe Yōko, *Kindai Nihon no Josei Senmon Kyōiku: Shōgai Kyōikugaku kara Mita Tokyo Joshi Ika Daigaku Sōritsusha Yoshioka Yayoi* (Tokyo, 2014).

(37) On Yokoi Tamako, see Yamazaki Mitsuo, *Futatsu no Hoshi, Yokoi Tamako to Satō Shizu: Joshi Bijutsu Daigaku Kengaku eno Michi* (Tokyo, 2010).

mainly because the government continued to adopt a negative attitude towards women's higher education. After the promulgation of the *Senmon Gakkō Rei* (the Vocational Colleges Act) in March 1903, only the Women's Institute of English Studies and the Japan Women's College were promoted to the higher status of vocational colleges or special women's higher educational institutions (both in 1904), followed by Tokyo Women's Medical College in 1912.⁽³⁸⁾ Although vocational colleges were still well below university status, they were approved by the government and were also the highest ranked women's educational institutions supported by the Japanese state.

Among the women's higher education institutions, the Japan Women's College was the largest in scale and the most unique institution. It aimed to provide students with a comprehensive integrated education, and seemed to have the greatest impact on the development of women's higher education. Its importance is such that this article will draw special attention to the Japan Women's University in the next section.

Part 2: The Japan Women's College

A biographical sketch of Naruse Jinzō

The founder of the Japan Women's College, Naruse Jinzō (1858–1919) was a leading educationalist who played a pioneering part in the promotion of women's higher education in Japan. He was born as the eldest son of a lower-class *samurai* (warrior) family in Yamaguchi Prefecture before the Meiji Restoration.⁽³⁹⁾ He first attended a local domain school, which was established by a feudal lord to educate the sons of the warrior class. There he studied *bushidō* (the warrior code) and Confucian classics. However, the hierarchical *shi-nō-kō-shō* system was abolished

⁽³⁸⁾ Shibukawa, *Kindai Nihon Joseishi: Kyōiku*, p. 49.

⁽³⁹⁾ On Naruse Jinzō's early life, see Nakajima Kuni, *Naruse Jinzō Kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2015), p. 38; Nakajima Kuni, *Naruse Jinzō* (Tokyo, 2002), pp. 1–27.

and equality of the people of all classes was newly introduced after the Meiji Restoration. Consequently, people of the warrior class lost power, so Naruse decided to go to a teachers' training college in Yamaguchi Prefecture and became a school teacher.

Although he taught at several schools in the prefecture, at the age of 19 an encounter with Sawayama Bouro had a great impact on Naruse's life. Sawayama, who was also from Yamaguchi Prefecture, went to America to study Christianity. After his return to Japan, he established Naniwa Church, the first self-supporting church in Japan, and became its first minister. He introduced Christianity to Naruse, which transformed his life.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Naruse left his province and moved to Osaka to be baptised. When Baika Girls' School was founded by the congregations of Naniwa Church in 1878, he started to work as the only full-time teacher there. His active participation in this Christian girls' school naturally led him to develop his strong interest in women's education.⁽⁴¹⁾

After four years working there, he began to work as a Christian minister of Kōriyama Church, and then Niigata Church. Although the number of girls who did not enrol in compulsory elementary school was very large in Niigata Prefecture, a plan of setting up the first girls' high school was proposed. Naruse strongly supported the plan, and established Niigata Girls' High School, the first one in Niigata Prefecture. He devoted himself to his missionary work as well as the promotion of girls' education for a while.⁽⁴²⁾

However, at the age of 33, he decided to go to the United States and spent three years studying at Andover Theological Seminary and at Clark University. Apart from his studies, he visited several women's higher educational institutions to observe their lessons and look around their dormitories.⁽⁴³⁾ These included Mount

(40) Ibid., pp. 28–33.

(41) Ibid., pp. 34–44.

(42) Nakajima, *Naruse Jinzō Kenkyū*, pp. 115–121.

Holyoke College, Vassar College, Wellesley College, Smith College and Bryn Mawr College.

Naruse was very much impressed by enlightened and well-educated women whom he met in America. Much useful knowledge was gained by careful observation of these pioneering women's liberal art colleges. This study abroad experience certainly became an ideal preparation for establishing his own women's college later. After returning to Japan in 1894, he took up position as headmaster of Baika Girls' School, for which he had once worked.⁽⁴⁴⁾ However, he kept this role for only two years and resigned because he quickly became dissatisfied with the school. As he wanted Japan to follow the American examples of top women's colleges, he was extremely eager to establish his own ideal women's college to produce enlightened women.

After his resignation, he launched a fund-raising campaign. In order to attract financial supporters, he completed a book entitled *Joshi Kyōiku (Female Education)*, in which he advocated the strong need for women's higher educational institutions.⁽⁴⁵⁾ He distributed complimentary copies of the book to the people who might support his new venture. His campaign naturally met with objections, opposition and lack of understanding. This was mainly because there were many common prejudices against women's higher education in the Meiji period, which could be summarised as follows:

Women's higher education makes women impertinent, conceited, insolent or big-headed: that it makes women cold-hearted; it detracts from female worldly wisdom, and renders them ignorant of the world, it harms female health; and it has a bad influence on their children's

⁽⁴³⁾ Nakajima, *Naruse Jinzō*, pp. 87–89.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–97.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 98–107.

education.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Therefore even well-educated men such as Hiratsuka Raichō's father believed that giving a daughter extra academic access and skills would do her more harm than good. Indeed, he strongly opposed Raichō's plan to study English at the Japan Women's College later.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Naruse for a few years had great difficulty in raising funds for his new venture to found his own college, but his encounter with Hirooka Asako changed this.⁽⁴⁸⁾ She was a daughter of the business magnate Mitsui Takamasu and the wife of Hirooka Shinjirō, a son of a wealthy merchant in Osaka. She was known in Japan as one of the most successful and pioneering businesswomen in the Meiji period after she rebuilt her husband's family's lost fortunes by establishing Kashima Bank and Daidō Life Insurance Company, which made her husband's family into an influential financial combine in Osaka.

Even so, in her childhood she was thirsty for knowledge and wanted to receive the better education which was available to her brothers, but she was banned not only from studying but also from reading books by her father because he believed that extra education would harm her. After she read Naruse's *Female Education*, she was greatly impressed with his urging the necessity of women's higher education.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Because of the bitter experience of her childhood, she wanted to provide women with the opportunity to receive higher education. She also believed that the access to higher education would help women to realise their potential and enable them to become financially independent and contribute more to society. Therefore she determined to cooperate to the best of her ability to fulfil his new

(46) Katayama, *Kindai Nihon no Joshi Kyōiku*, pp. 107–108.

(47) Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, Vol. 1, pp. 133–134.

(48) On Hirooka Asako, see Nagao Gō, *Hirooka Asako Kedakaki Shōgai* (Tokyo, 2015).

(49) Nakajima, *Naruse Jinzō*, p. 126.

venture of opening a women's higher educational institution.

She was the most reliable collaborator whom Naruse could have. She was full of energy and innovative ideas, and most significantly she was well-connected with influential people in financial circles and the world of politics. She made the best use of her own Mitsui family and her husband's family and their contacts. Naruse met a wide range of eminent people and asked for donations.

The foundation of the Japan Women's College

As a result, Naruse raised a substantial sum of 100,000 yen to establish the Japan Women's College, taking donations from many prominent figures such as Ōkuma Shigenobu (a statesman who served as Prime Minister and also the founder of Waseda University), the Prime Minister, Itō Hirobumi, Shibusawa Eiichi (an industrialist who founded the first modern bank in Japan), and other distinguished people.⁵⁰ His college also received government financial support, despite its status as a private institution. The Empress Meiji made a donation of 2,000 yen. The Mitsui combine, Hirooka Asako's family, donated a spacious area of land in Mejirodai, Tokyo, which was used to construct two buildings for teaching, three dormitories and two buildings for teachers' accommodation. With his many contacts, he was also successful in recruiting trustees, the great majority of whom were prominent figures in politics or the business world, including Iwakura Tomomi, Ōkuma Shigenobu, Shibusawa Eiichi, and leaders of the three major *zaibatsu* (financial combines): Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo.

Although it was much smaller than the imperial universities and leading private universities, which only men could attend, the Japan Women's College was private, and much larger than any of its other contemporary women's higher educational institutions in terms of campus size, facilities and student numbers.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 126–127.

According to *Nihon Joshi Daigaku no 80-nen (The Eighty-Year History of the Japan Women's University)*, there was a large attendance at the opening ceremony of the college on 20 April 1901.⁽⁵¹⁾ More than 1,300 people comprising students, their parents, staff, school trustees and celebrities attended as guests. This grand opening contrasted sharply with the humble opening ceremonies of Tokyo Women's Medical College with only four students and two teaching staff, and the Women's Institute of English Studies with only 10 students, 5 staff and a couple of guests, being present.⁽⁵²⁾

The main objectives of the college

It is important to introduce the main objectives of the college, which were very similar to the principles of women's higher education which Naruse enunciated in his book *Women's Education*.

The main educational policy that our college will pursue will be to educate students firstly as human beings, secondly as women, and thirdly as Japanese citizens. When one evaluates older but still existing education available to women, one will notice that such education has focused on providing them with practical information and performing artistic skills. It completely failed to educate women as human beings. This was mainly because most people treated women as machinery. Educating women as human beings is not the only purpose of general education. Another purpose is professional and technical education. Educating women as human beings will enable them to develop their faculties mentally and physically. It will also enable them to become

(51) Nihon Joshi Daigaku (ed.), *Nihon Joshi Daigaku no 80-nen* (Tokyo, 1981), p. 22.

(52) Tsuda Umeko, 'Kaikōshiki Shikiji', in Yamazaki Takako (ed.), *Kaiteiban Tsuda Umeko Monjo* (1980, Tokyo, 1984 edn), pp. 1–4.

well-integrated, refined and cultivated women. Such education will certainly improve qualities essential for all humanity.⁵³

Naruse's aim to educate female students as women, and as Japanese citizens, inspired many women including the well-known feminist Hiratsuka Raichō, who decided to enter the college.⁵⁴

The characteristics of students

The number of students who registered with the Japan Women's College on the opening in 1901 was 222.⁵⁵ The college did not have any entrance examination, and it allowed entry to any motivated woman who had graduated from a girls' high school with a good school record. According to *Nihon Joshidai 80-nen (The Eighty-Year History of the Japan Women's University)*, the College did not have any age limit, so there was a large disparity in students' ages, from 18 to 35 years old.⁵⁶

Hiratsuka Raichō, who entered the college at the age of 18 in April 1903, two years after its foundation, remarked that there was a large age gap among students, and some of them were middle-aged women.⁵⁷ She also recalled that she lost her bearings at first, as it was an entirely different world to her after Ochanomizu Girls' High School. In particular, she was surprised by new types of students whom she met there:

I was stunned by the atmosphere of students at this women's college. I

⁵³ Naruse Jinzō, 'Nihon Joshi Daigakkō Setsuritsu no Shushi', in Nihon Joshi Daigaku Joshi Kyōiku Kenkyūjo (ed.), *Kōgo no Joshi Kyōiku: Naruse Jinzō Joshi Daigakuron Senshū* (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 65–66.

⁵⁴ Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, Vol. 1, pp. 132–133.

⁵⁵ Nihon Joshi Daigaku (ed.), *Nihon Joshi Daigaku no 80-nen*, p. 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁷ Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, Vol. 1, p. 137.

felt as if I had stepped into an adult world all at once. I was bewildered and embarrassed by this. The range of students which the college had then was very diverse. Some students had already taught at elementary schools for several years, and others were widows or married women with children....I also noticed that there were many students from provincial areas. Many of them had different regional dialects.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Indeed the great majority of students were daughters from educated classes, and they came from all over Japan. Those from provincial areas tended to be daughters of business magnates or landowners or village headmen. Despite many differences, they had one thing in common. All of them were highly motivated and relatively liberated women, with a passion for study, and many of them entered the college in spite of opposition from parents or local opinion.

Teaching staff

The Japan Women's College provided students with excellent teaching. Unlike the Women's Institute of English Studies, where there were few teaching staff, more than 50 experienced teachers were initially employed by the college.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Many of these had studied abroad in western countries such as America, Britain and Germany, and were well-qualified academics who graduated from Tokyo Imperial University. Some of them had doctorates in literature, medicine and science. Others held professorships at Tokyo Imperial University and the Japan Women's College concurrently. All of them approved the educational policy introduced by Naruse, and wanted to advance the cause of women's higher education.

The Japan Women's College also hired some full-time and part-time native speakers of English who taught English language, English literature and the piano.

(58) Ibid., p. 137.

(59) Nakajima, *Naruse Jinzō*, pp. 156–159.

Surprisingly Elizabeth Phillips Hughes' name appeared as a professor of the Department of English.⁽⁶⁰⁾ She was a pioneer of women's higher education in Britain, with teaching experience at Cheltenham Ladies' College, where she worked with Dorothea Beale. She had achieved excellent academic results from Newnham College, Cambridge. In 1885 she had been appointed as the first principal of the Cambridge Training College for Women Teachers.

After her retirement, Hughes, apparently under instructions from the British government, came to Japan in August 1901 to observe Japanese education.⁽⁶¹⁾ She visited many educational institutions throughout Japan, and gave numerous public lectures on teaching methods. Naruse offered her a visiting professorship, asking her to teach English language and literature.⁽⁶²⁾ Hughes, given her experience, certainly helped to raise the standard of English teaching, and gave Naruse advice and suggestions about how to run a women's higher educational institution.

The curriculum

The Japan Women's College had three departments: English, Japanese Literature and Domestic Science. It offered an array of subjects in accordance with Naruse's wish to provide an extensive education. Hiratsuka Raichō, who was a student of the Department of Domestic Science, recollected the subjects that she studied.

At the Japan Women's College I attended all the compulsory subjects for my home economics course, which comprised practical ethics, moral philosophy, pedagogy, experimental psychology, child psychology,

(60) Ibid., p. 157. On Elizabeth Phillips Hughes, see Pam Hirsch & Marc McBeth, *Teacher Training at Cambridge: The Initiatives of Oscar Browning and Elizabeth Hughes* (London, 2004); Margaret Bottrall, *Hughes Hall 1885–1985* (Cambridge, 1985).

(61) Shirai Takako, *Meiji-ki Joshi Kōtō Kyōiku ni Okeru Nichiei no Kōryū* (Tokyo, 2018), p. 77.

(62) Ibid., p. 70.

biology, applied chemistry, hygiene, physiology, economics and practical training in cookery.⁶³

The college also allowed students, who were registered with one department, to attend courses at other departments. Students of the Domestic Science Department, such as Hiratsuka, who were also interested in studying humanities subjects, could attend classes on Japanese and western history and art history. They could study many academic subjects.⁶⁴

Among these a unique subject offered was the founder Naruse's *jissen rinri* (practical ethics).⁶⁵ This was a compulsory course, which provided basic moral and academic training. Naruse covered extensive topics, such as the principles of women's higher education, the main objectives of the Japan Women's College, and introductory sessions on religion, philosophy and ethics. Naruse's teaching was based on learning in religion, philosophy and ethics, and his experience as a Christian minister and educationalist. Hiratsuka Raichō, who attended this course, admitted that it opened a new world for her, and she became his ardent admirer.⁶⁶ She remembered that most of the students proclaimed themselves to be devotees of Naruse. They prided themselves on being under the influence of a great educationalist.

With regard to educational policy there, the traditional method of cramming knowledge into students was absent. Naruse particularly disliked passivity of learning, only memorising things. In his book *Shin Jidai no Kyōiku* (*Education in the New Era*) he discussed his more effective methods:

⁶³ Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, Vol. 1, p. 144.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 145.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 138–140.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

All human beings have inborn within them precious self-motivation. The fundamental method, which produces the highest possible educational result, is to develop and cultivate students' voluntary motivation.⁽⁶⁷⁾

Naruse encouraged students to acquire the habit of *jigaku jishū* (studying for themselves), and he also emphasised the need for *sōzōryoku no sonchō* (respect for creativity).⁽⁶⁸⁾ In order to put his ideas into practice, the curricula of the Japan Women's College were carefully constructed. To increase time for students' self-study, it restricted teaching to a maximum of 25 hours a week. Regular staff-student seminars were organised and guest speakers were invited. These arrangements were made to stimulate students' intellectual potential, broaden their horizons and promote personal character.

Students were not under any strict academic pressure since they had no examinations, and were never asked to write essays. The only requirement was to submit a dissertation, on any topic.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Although most students wrote a dissertation on their specialised subjects, Hiratsuka graduated from the Department of Domestic Science in 1906 on the basis of a short twenty-page dissertation on an aspect of the history of religion, which was irrelevant to her academic specialism.⁽⁷⁰⁾ She was surprised that such a dissertation met the graduation requirement.

The development of the college

After the promulgation of the Senmon Gakkō Rei (Vocational Colleges Act) in March 1903, the Japan Women's College was elevated to the higher status of *senmon gakkō* (vocational colleges or special women's higher educational

(67) Cited in Fujii & Kanamori, *Onna no Kyōiku*, p. 42.

(68) Naruse Jinzō, 'Jigaku Jishū Shugi', in Nihon Joshi Daigaku Joshi Kyōiku Kenkyūjo (ed.), *Kongo no Joshi Kyōiku*, pp. 183–186.

(69) Hiratsuka, *Genshi*, Vol. 1, p. 178.

(70) Ibid., pp. 176–178.

institutions). In 1904 the first graduation ceremony was held and 120 students graduated from the college. With the victory of the Russo-Japanese war, the college succeeded in recruiting more students, which led to its expansion. In 1906 the Education Department was newly created and the library was constructed. In the same year, a kindergarten and primary school attached to the college were also founded. The college had already established a girls' high school attached to it immediately after its foundation. Therefore the opening of the kindergarten and primary school allowed the college to practise one continuous educational operation under Naruse's educational policy, from kindergarten to college. The total number of students belonging to the college as well as its attached institutions increased to about 1,300.

Although women's higher education as a whole continued to be criticised, the Japan Women's College played a significant part in providing students with academic experience and also promoted its self-image as an ideal educational establishment producing elite women who could become fine examples to others. After Naruse's death, Asō Shōzō became the second principal and assumed Naruse's educational policy. Consequently the college kept on expanding, and the Department of Social Welfare was established in 1921. In 1948 the college was upgraded to university status and became the Japan Women's University with three faculties: Home Economics, English and Japanese Literature. By 2020 it was developed into the university with 4 faculties, about 200 staff and over 6,000 students, and remains one of the most prestigious women's institutes of higher education in Japan together with Tsuda Women's University and Tokyo Women's Christian University.

Conclusion

Having examined the emergence and development of women's higher education in Japan, it is clear that it had many merits. First, through higher

education its graduates acquired the skills to become financially independent. Many of them used such skills to become in effect ‘career women’. For example, the graduates from the Women’s Institute of English Studies, who became proficient in English as a result of the intensive English language training, worked as English teachers and translators. Similarly many women who graduated from the Japan Women’s College went into teaching, which was more open to women in the late Meiji and Taishō periods. Among them, some women such as Tsuruko Haraguchi went to America to continue their further studies at graduate school, and obtained a Ph.D. degree there, subsequently becoming academics after their return to Japan. Others became psychologists, journalists, poets, playwrights and novelists. Indeed the great majority of early members and supporters of Hiratsuka Raichō’s Seitō Society, and its literary journal *Seitō*, were graduates from the Japan Women’s College. But for the Japan Women’s College, both the Seitō Society and *Seitō* would never have come into being.

The commercial world also provided women who completed higher education with new fields of work, for example, as secretaries or clerks or stenographers. In spite of extreme reluctance to welcome women into the medical profession, Yoshioka Yayoi’s Tokyo Women’s Medical College gave medical training and recruited female medical doctors. In short women’s higher education created better career opportunities for its graduates, many of whom gained economic independence and personal accomplishment through work.

It is also significant that women’s higher educational institutions produced a few leading feminists such as Hiratsuka Raichō, Oku Mumeo, Ichikawa Fusae and Yamakawa Kikue. These were products of women’s higher education. They were well-read, and had advanced English language skills, which enabled them to read English books written by major western feminists like Ellen Key and Olive Schreiner. Consequently the Japanese feminists were influenced by the ideas of western feminists, and began to show much interest in women’s rights and legal

changes for women, challenging the male-dominated society. They took an initiative in launching women's movements in order to create a better society where equal educational, employment and legal rights would be available to women. In fact they devoted themselves to many women's causes such as legal reform affecting marriage, divorce and child custody, women's educational and occupational reforms and suffrage. These feminists were products of new women's higher educational institutions. They all benefitted considerable from the opening to them of higher education. It gave them confidence to articulate their views, and to engage in public feminist campaigns in a society where the penalties for doing this were more severe than in any other industrial country.

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