

Research on the Course of Development and Change of Japanese Higher Education

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Abstract

This article analyzes the statistical data on higher education research in Japan and some academic journals, conference papers, and books on higher education research. Based on the existing research results, it uses quantitative methods as much as possible to examine the past systematically. Main trends and research characteristics of Japanese higher education research in the past 40 years, summarizing the main problems. The results of this article show that: First, the continuous increase in the number of literatures on higher education research in Japan for a long time indicates that higher education research has not been taken seriously in Japan. Second, Japan's higher education policy and higher education reform measures directly affected the changes in the themes of higher education research and the quantity. Third, Japanese higher education research generally pays more attention to the relationship between research and government and social changes, has a strong problem awareness, and emphasizes the practicality and pertinence of research. Fourth, Japanese higher education referred to American research, but starting from the late 1990s, the focus of comparative research on Japanese higher education has shifted to China and South Korea. Finally, the academic research of higher education in the past 40 years has gradually shifted from focusing on the sorting and interpretation of historical materials and texts to more quantitative research based on large-scale questionnaire survey data. In addition, compared with the earlier studies that focused on introducing and translating American scholars, academic research in recent years has emphasized originality and novelty.

Keywords: Higher education research, Subject change, Originality

1. Introduction

In the past 40 years, as in many other countries and regions, with the changes in society, economy, politics, culture, and higher education itself, the objects, content, and methods of Japanese higher education research have also undergone significant changes. So far, relevant research institutions, scholars, or professional societies in Japan have reviewed the changes in previous higher education research. For example, in 1992, the Hiroshima University Higher Education Research and Development Center, which was the first in Japan to specialize in higher education, organized and published a special feature on the 20th anniversary of the center's establishment in the academic journal "University Essays" sponsored by the center. Review and Outlook. The center's full-time researchers and some specially invited external

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experts have researched Japanese higher education in the past 20 years in 12 fields including university education, research, enrolment, internationalization, system, higher education history, employment of university students, and university teachers. Summarize and look forward to future development [1]. In 2004, the center organized the publication of the special collection "30 Years of Higher Education Research" [2], and in 2014 it also organized the publication of the 40th-anniversary special collection "Review and Prospect of Higher Education Research" [3]. The 1992 album mainly reviewed and summarized the research in several major higher education fields in the past 20 years. The following two special albums are mainly analyzed, sorted out, and looked forward to the main research areas of Japanese higher education in the past 10 years. In addition, after the establishment of the Japanese Higher Education Association in 1997, it organized and published a special collection in its journal "Higher Education Research" in 2007 [4], and invited scholars in related fields to sort out and discuss the promotion of higher education in the past 10 years. What are the roles played in the research process? What contributions have been made? What main research results have been published by its members? What problems still exist, etc. For example, Hashimoto summarized the main research topics involved based on the topics, abstracts, and keywords of the annual meeting of the Japan Higher Education Association from 1997 to 2008 [5]. However, despite these relevant reviews and summaries, there is currently no academic institution or researcher in Japan on the overall situation and development context of Japanese higher education research from 1979 to 2019—especially the changes in research topics and their background, higher education Research paradigm, research theory and methodology, etc.-to carry out a comprehensive review and summary. Given this, this article analyzes the statistical data on higher education research across Japan and some academic journals, conference papers, and books on higher education research, etc., based on the existing research results, and uses quantitative methods as much as possible to compare systematically. It carefully examines the main trends and research characteristics of Japanese higher education research in the past 40 years and summarizes the main problems that exist.

The following first introduces the basic development trajectory of Japanese higher education research institutions and organizations after the Second World War, and then briefly explains the analysis framework and research methods of this article. The third part mainly describes the changes and characteristics of the main fields and themes of higher education research since 1979, and analyzes and compares academic journals that can represent the changes in Japanese higher education research, and more specifically discusses the themes of Japanese higher education research in the past 40 years. Finally, it summarizes the characteristics of Japanese higher education research

2. The development of Japanese higher education research institutions and organizations

Although before the Second World War, Japan had related literature on higher education. For example, in 1938, Yao Hirose published a paper entitled "The Fundamental of Honkō Higher Education is Masaki" [6], which mainly discussed how to reform and improve Japanese higher education. The quality and level of education, but the institutionalization and systematization of higher education research began after the war. For example, the IDE (Institute for Development of Higher Education) University Association was established in 1954 by Japanese universities and higher education researchers. Its members are mainly university and higher education-related administrators, professional researchers, scholars in related fields, and university students. And graduate students. The board of directors of the

association is mainly composed of presidents from various universities in Japan, heads of academic institutions, and some managers from enterprises. IDE University Association has branches in six regions of Japan, and different regions conduct regular academic exchange activities according to their characteristics. Unlike the Higher Education Research Professional Association, the association mainly provides a platform for Japanese higher education management and researchers to continue academic exchanges and helps members discuss, share and research various practical and practical issues related to higher education. The association itself also conducts surveys related to higher education. The association regularly publishes the monthly magazine "IDE Modern Higher Education", and as of April 2020, 619 issues have been published. At the same time, the association also publishes various related manuals from time to time, such as "Discussion and Hands-on" and "Teachers and Students" for reference by members or relevant departments. In addition, the association regularly organizes annual meetings and organizes various academic conferences and seminars related to higher education. Since the early postwar period, the association has played a huge role in popularizing higher education knowledge, expanding the influence of higher education in society, and exploring practical issues in higher education. From the perspective of professional societies related to higher education research, some Japanese scholars established the Association for the History of University Education in 1966 to try to conduct systematic research on university history. The Educational Research and Development Center of Hiroshima University, which was directly established and funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan in 1972 marked the official appearance and foothold of higher education research as an independent field in the National University of Japan. The center is Japan's first institution specializing in higher education research. Different from related societies or other research institutes in universities, the center has a team of full-time higher education faculty, independent budgets, personnel rights, and regularly issued higher education academic journals, and regularly hosts national researcher gatherings and other related higher education Various international and domestic conferences, workshops, etc. In 1986, the center became the first research institution in Japan to have the qualifications to grant master's degrees and doctoral degrees in higher education and recruited masters and doctoral students engaged in higher education research at home and abroad. As of 2019, the center has trained nearly a hundred teachers engaged in higher education-related courses, scientific research personnel, administrators, and other professionals for higher education institutions, research institutions, government agencies, and other industries at home and abroad. . In the 1990s, the Japanese government relaxed the benchmarks for a university setting, requiring all universities to carry out self-evaluation and accept external evaluations, improve teacher teaching standards, and establish teacher development centers. More and more universities have established academic research institutions or teacher development centers. Carry out relevant scientific research and practical activities. In April 1996, the University Education Research Center of Hiroshima University and 11 other national universities jointly initiated the establishment of Japan's first National University Education Research Center and other conferences (National University Education Research, etc. conference). As of April 2019, 37 universities or higher education research centers of Japan's 86 national universities have joined the council and become member schools. The council holds a meeting every year to exchange information on higher education, engage in cooperative research, and focus on exploring various issues facing national universities and has made significant contributions to the reform of Japanese universities. The establishment of the Institute of Higher Education in Japan in 1997 marked

the official appearance of a national academic organization specializing in higher education research in Japan.

The diversified higher education research activities brought about by the expansion of related institutions and organizations have undoubtedly influenced the themes, content, and research methods of Japanese higher education research in the past 40 years.

3. Japanese data usage and research framework

This article mainly adopts the following methods to collect and collate relevant literature on Japanese higher education research since 1979. First, use the Japanese National Institute of Informatics' public network database platform (Scholarly and Academic Information Navigator) and the Japanese National Diet Library Online database (National Diet Library Online) to input keywords such as higher education, higher education research, university research, etc., Eliminate irrelevant information. For example, to filter out documents published in countries and regions outside Japan, book reviews related to higher education research published in Japan, memoirs and commemorative articles written by higher education researchers or university administrators, etc. As of March 2020, approximately 70,000 related documents have been sorted out. It should be noted that these documents are not exclusively academic papers, but also include the titles and abstracts of doctoral dissertations related to higher education research, books and publications related to higher education research published by the relevant professional society of Japan or other academic organizations, and various universities or schools in Japan. Papers and research reports included in the research minutes published by academic departments, research institutions, etc., academic papers and book indexes collected by the National Diet Library, other newspapers and periodicals published in public, abstracts of academic reports from the annual conferences of higher education-related societies, each university Seminars and international conferences organized by academic institutions, reports, lectures, and various conference proceedings related to higher education, etc. Secondly, refer to the review and prospects of the advanced research results of Japanese higher education research published by Japan's "Sociology of Education Research" (Sociology of Education), "Collected Universities", and "Higher Education Research" (Higher Education Research). By consulting and searching the relevant document titles and partial abstracts included in the two major databases, dozens of keywords related to Japanese higher education research in the past 40 years have been summarized. Third, on this basis, referring to Martin Trow's general classification of higher education research and the functions of higher education research centers [7], the referenced documents are divided into two categories: the first category is international comparative research. That is country studies outside of Japan. It mainly includes the United States, Britain, Germany, France, the Soviet Union, China, and South Korea; the second category is research on higher education-related topics, which is divided into macroscopic research and microscopic research. The former refers to the study of topics outside universities and institutions of higher learning, including theories, policies, and systems, reforms, finances and funding, the corporate and evaluation of universities, etc.; the latter mainly involves topics within universities and institutions of higher learning, including individual University history, history of higher education and school history, internationalization, university students, university teachers, general education and liberal education, university internal governance, teacher professional development, admissions, and examinations, etc. The second category also includes some documents related to overseas higher education research in the first category, which are differentiated by country. The two are not completely independent and

have different categories. To describe the general development trajectory of Japanese higher education research since 1979, this article divides the past 40 years into 7 different periods, each period spanning about 6 years. According to the relevant data collected by the above methods, the characteristics and changes of Japanese higher education research in different periods are explained according to different themes and countries.

4. Data analysis and discussion

First of all, it is not difficult to see from [Figure 1] that, in addition to the decline in the number of documents related to higher education research from 2015 to 2019, the number of documents has continued to rise from 1979 to 2014. The main reasons may include: the overall expansion of the research team of higher education, for example, the number of members of the Japanese Higher Education Association has been increasing every year; Japanese higher education institutions' research and pay attention to higher education issues continue to increase. For example, the university education research center, teacher development, education development and evaluation center, college research center, etc.; the number of masters and doctoral students studying higher education, scientific research personnel, administrative management personnel, etc. continue to increase. In addition, an important reason for the decrease in the number of documents in the recent period is that many journals or publications in 2019 are often officially published in the first half of 2020. By the time this article is completed, many documents have not been officially published or entered into the database, so they cannot be included in 2019.

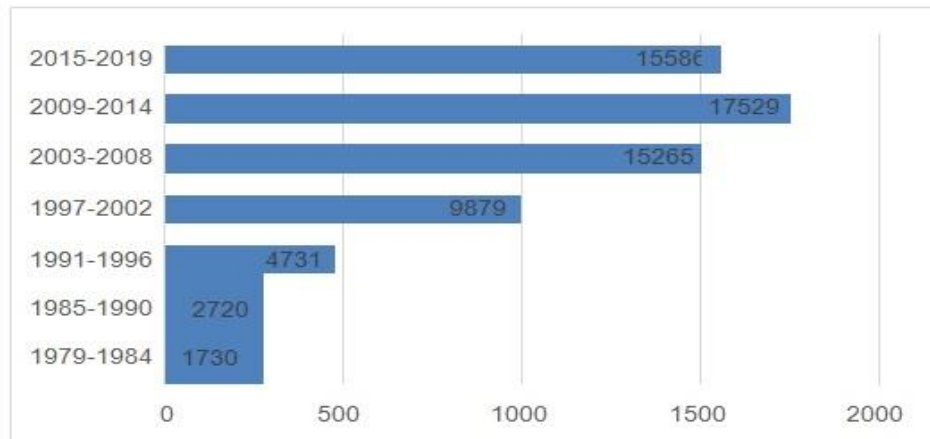


Figure 1. Changes in the number of higher education research documents from 1979 to 2019

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, if the relevant literature is roughly divided into two categories: macro-research and micro-research shown in [Figure. 2], the number of literature on micro-research in Japan has increased much more than that of macro-research in the past 40 years. As of 2019, the number of documents related to micro-research is as high as 61,209, while the number of macro-research documents is only 6,178, the former is about 10 times that of the latter. Although the number of macro-documents increased from 1979 to 2008, the growth rate was much lower than that of micro-research documents and has continued to decrease thereafter. In contrast, except for 2015~2019, the number of micro-research literature has been increasing In the past 40 years, the continuous increase in the number of micro-research documents reflects the increasing emphasis on the internal issues of

institutions in Japanese higher education research. This is in line with the Japanese government's efforts to build a diversified higher education system in the late 1980s and encourage higher education institutions to develop their characteristics. The formation of school running, teaching, research, and talent training reform with distinctive characteristics is related to [8]. Especially in 1991, the Japanese government relaxed the benchmarks for university setting [9], and higher education institutions gained more autonomy in running schools, which directly affected the growth of higher education micro-research literature. The corporate reform of Japanese national and public universities that began in 2004 has also prompted many higher education researchers and administrative personnel to pay more attention to the reforms within the institutions [10][11]. Almost in the same period (1991~2008), changes in the higher education system, the relationship between the government and universities, the structure, finances, appropriations, and functions have also affected the changes in the macro-research literature on higher education [12].

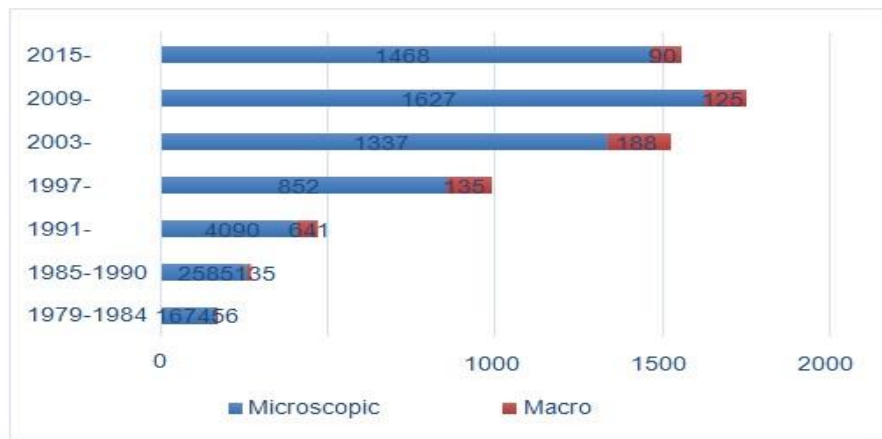


Figure 2. Changes in the number of macro-research and micro-research literature from 1979 to 2019

Third, [Table 1] shows the changes in specific themes of higher education macro-research in the past 40 years. Overall, the number of documents related to the subject of higher education reform is the largest, up to 3376; the second is the literature on university evaluation or evaluation, with 1695; the third is the literature on higher education policies and systems, with 560 articles. In terms of changes in the number of documents on different topics, there were not many documents on theories from 1979 to 1990, but even in 2019, this type of literature has maintained a growing trend. The number of documents on policies and systems also continued to increase from 1979 to 2014. In contrast, the number of documents on other topics showed a trend of first increasing and then decreasing. It is worth pointing out that, in addition to discussing and reviewing the related literature on reforms, the literature on higher education policies and systems from 1979 to 1990 was far more than the literature on other topics, reflecting that the macro studies of Japanese higher education before the 1990s mainly focused on policies and systems. After 1991, the amount of literature on university evaluation has grown rapidly and surpassed the amount of literature on policy and institutional topics, reflecting that since the 1990s, more and more macro studies have begun to focus on university evaluation. As mentioned above, the data collected in this article includes not only academic papers but also research reports, summary and review of scientific research topics, interview records, conference speeches, and other forms of information.

Many documents are reformed and it is not difficult to understand. This may be the main reason for the largest amount of literature on higher education reform. In the literature concerning policies and systems, quite a lot of them introduce and analyze the changes or characteristics of higher education policies and systems in countries and regions outside Japan from the perspective of international comparison. This was especially obvious before the 1990s. Many documents are introduced and reviewed, and even translated the higher education policies and systems of the United States and other countries. For example, the "University Collection" published by the University Education Research Center of Hiroshima University from 1979 to 1985 shows that of the 11 translations related to higher education, most of them introduced the higher education policies and policies of developed Western countries such as the United States, Britain, and Germany. As the government began to implement relevant policies in the late 1990s, discussing and implementing reforms related to national and public universities, such as the privatization of national universities and independent administrative legal personification, the literature on higher education policies and systems has greatly increased. Before the 1990s, the literature on university evaluation was less than the research on policies and systems; after that, the number of documents directly related to the evaluation of universities or higher education institutions increased significantly more than the latter.

The main reasons for the above changes include: in 1991, when the government relaxed the benchmarks for universities, it also required colleges and universities to implement self-evaluation and external evaluation to ensure the quality of education. The legal personification of national universities and some local public universities that began in 2004 also requires legal person institutions to carry out self-assessment and accept various external and third-party assessments [13]. In this context, colleges and universities have set up relevant institutions such as on-campus evaluation centers to continuously strengthen research on evaluation while implementing various evaluation activities [14]. In addition, since the various evaluation systems and methods introduced by Japan are mainly based on the concepts and frameworks of Europe and the United States, especially the United States, Britain, and some continental European countries, the literature on higher education evaluation in relevant countries and regions has naturally increased [15].

In the late 1980s, the gross enrolment rate of the 18-year-old population in higher education in Japan exceeded 60%. The scale of higher education continued to expand, entering the late stage of popularization, and gradually moving towards popularization. Since the 1990s, higher education has shifted from emphasizing the gradual development of quantity to the guarantee and improvement of the quality of higher education. The focus of higher education reform lies within the university, especially the teaching, learning, and education quality at the undergraduate level [16].

Table 1. Thematic changes of the macro-research literature from 1979 to 2019

Theme	1979-1984	1985-1990	1991-1996	1997-2002	2003-2008	2009-2014	2015-2019	Total
Theory	1	5	6	21	34	67	71	205
Policies, systems, etc.	23	25	47	101	117	134	113	560
Reform	31	82	516	831	875	529	512	3376
Finance, appropriation, etc.	0	10	4	4	14	17	1	50
University legalization	0	0	0	23	293	70	7	393
University Evaluation	1	23	72	377	568	456	198	1695

Fourth, based on sorting out the titles and abstracts of relevant documents, [Table 2] lists 12 representative micro-research topics. In terms of the total number, the literature involving "college students" is the most, up to 27,843, followed by 7631 related to college admissions and examinations, and 6569 related to the employment of college students, followed by industry and academia. Cooperation (4101 articles), university internationalization (3577 articles), and university teachers and academic professions (3324 articles).

At present, the development of the number of higher education in Japan has entered the stage of popularization, and the gross enrolment rate of higher education is close to 80%. Compared with domestic higher education, a characteristic of Japanese higher education is that, regardless of the number of students or the number of institutions, the proportion of private institutions is close to 80%. Like most countries, Japanese private colleges mainly rely on tuition income to maintain their operations and carry out teaching and scientific research activities. How to ensure sufficient students is the top priority for private colleges. Related to this, after the legalization of national and public universities, these institutions also need to formulate various strategic measures to attract sufficient students. Since the employment situation of college students directly affects the reputation of colleges and universities and future enrolment, micro-research continues to focus on students, and it is not difficult to understand the aspects of enrolment examination and employment. In addition, compared with many countries, Japanese higher education has started industry-university cooperation earlier and focused on the internationalization of universities and the research of university teachers and academic professions and has formed a relatively stable research team.

Judging from the changes in the number of documents on different topics, the literature on college admissions and examinations and the connection between high school education and university education from 1979 to 2019 showed a continuous growth trend. If you do not consider the literature statistics from 2015 to 2019, the number of literature on university internationalization, university students, university teachers, and academic professions, university governance, first-year education, or topics has also continued to increase. The number of documents on the professional development of university teachers decreased from 1997 to 2002, but the magnitude was not obvious, and the overall trend was generally increasing. In contrast, although the amount of literature on general education and literacy education continued to increase from 1979 to 2002, there has been a continuous decline since then. From the perspective of the amount of literature, compared with the macro-research themes, the early micro-research themes have not changed from the recent research themes. For example, the top three related topics from 1979 to 1984 were college students (787 articles), college admissions and examinations (298 articles), and employment of college students (175 articles). The three topics with the largest number of documents from 2015 to 2019 are also college students (6632 articles), college admissions and examinations (1679 articles), and college students' employment (1545 articles). As for the changes in the amount of literature on general education and liberalization education, the main reason is that how to set up and develop general education and liberalization education suitable for Japanese university education has been one of the focuses of higher education research since the war [17]. This is also an important reason why the number of documents on this topic is second only to the top three topics, which is as high as 223 articles. In 1991, the Japanese government began to implement nationwide undergraduate education reform, changing the general education of general education in the United States in the early post-war period to a liberal arts education that focuses on liberal arts education, allowing colleges and universities to operate by their school policies and talent training standards. Unique undergraduate education courses, especially liberal arts education subjects. As mentioned earlier, while

granting colleges and universities great autonomy and academic freedom, to ensure the quality of education at the college level and continue to maintain the influence and supervision of relevant government departments on colleges and universities, the government also requires colleges and universities to carry out evaluation activities and related Teacher professional development activities to improve the teaching level of teachers, especially young teachers. These policies have directly affected and greatly promoted the research and attention of higher education and social-related groups and institutions on general education, especially post-1990s education.

Table 2. Thematic changes of micro-research literature from 1979 to 2019

Theme	1979-1984	1985-1990	1991-1996	1997-2002	2003-2008	2009-2014	2015-2019	Total
University history, higher education history, school history, etc.	68	54	75	304	496	419	256	1672
University Internationalization	64	324	416	531	684	812	746	3577
College Students	787	1190	1929	3754	5778	7773	6632	27843
University teachers, academic professions	59	62	149	466	779	919	890	3324
General education, liberal arts education	223	274	396	634	585	513	371	2996
University governance	0	0	0	1	11	50	30	92
faculty development	0	0	52	35	141	208	111	547
Industry-University Cooperation	0	1	7	547	1542	1151	853	4101
University admissions and exams	298	500	674	1425	1616	1439	1679	7631
The connection between high school and university	0	0	0	6	83	201	888	1178
Students Employment	175	180	392	809	1441	2018	1545	6560
First-grade education	0	0	0	14	222	770	682	1688

Fifth, from the perspective of the changes and characteristics of international comparative research, [Figure 3] shows the literature statistics concerning higher education in major countries outside Japan from 1979 to 2019. The data in Figure 3 does not include all countries. This article mainly refers to the relevant literature titles, abstracts, and keywords, and selects the top few countries in the number of literature as the analysis object. According to relevant documents and advanced research published by related databases, academic journals, and publishing institutions[18], in the past 40 years, if ranked according to the total number of documents, the literature involving higher education in the United States is the most, about 1212, accounting for 7 countries in the table 41% of the total number of documents, followed by China (656 articles), followed by the United Kingdom (433 articles), South Korea (214 articles), Germany (196 articles), France (186 articles) and the Soviet Union (51 articles).

Since post-war Japan has mainly rebuilt higher education by learning and imitating American ideas, and the formulation and reform of higher education policies in the past 40 years have paid more attention to drawing on American experience and practices, it is not difficult to understand that a large amount of literature involves American higher education. Secondly, as a neighbouring country, the Japanese higher education community has always attached great importance to the study of higher education in China. Especially after the reform and opening up, the exchanges between China and Japan in various aspects of higher

education have become more frequent. In addition, traditionally, when Japan formulates major higher education policies or guidelines, it often examines the relevant policies of Western developed countries such as the United States, Britain, Germany, and France, and refers to and compares the experiences and lessons of these countries according to its situation, Formulate and implement relevant higher education policies based on feasibility studies.

Sixth, [Figure 4] shows the changes in the number of higher education documents involving the United States, major European countries, China and South Korea in different periods in the past 40 years. It is not difficult to see that from 1979 to 1990 and from 1997 to 2002, the number of documents involving the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and the Soviet Union exceeded that of China and South Korea. However, after 2003, although the number of documents related to the United States still ranks first, documents involving China and South Korea continue to exceed the sum of the four European countries. In other words, since the beginning of the 21st century, in addition to continuing to emphasize research on the United States, Japanese higher education research has gradually shifted its focus from developed European countries to Japan’s neighbours, China and South Korea.

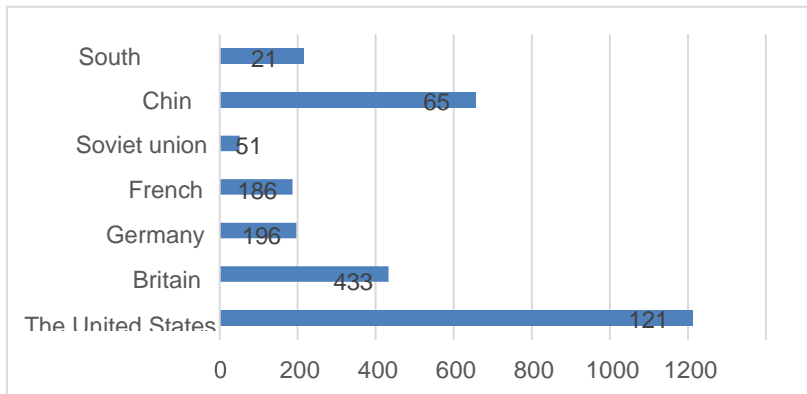


Figure 3. The quantitative distribution of higher education literature in different countries from 1979 to 2019

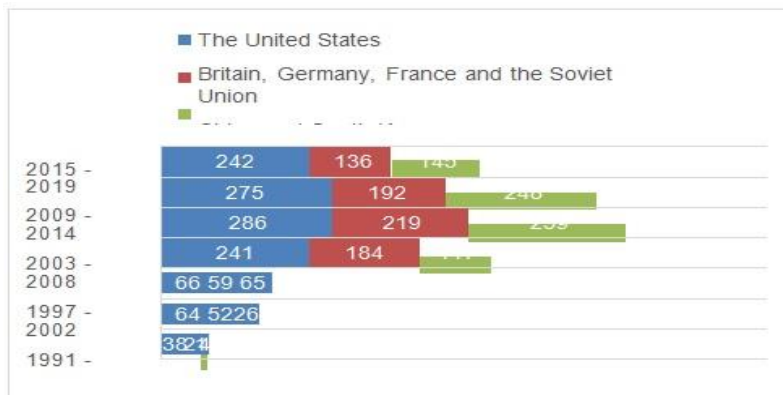


Figure 4. Changes in the number of documents on higher education in the United States, major European countries, China and South Korea from 1979 to 2019

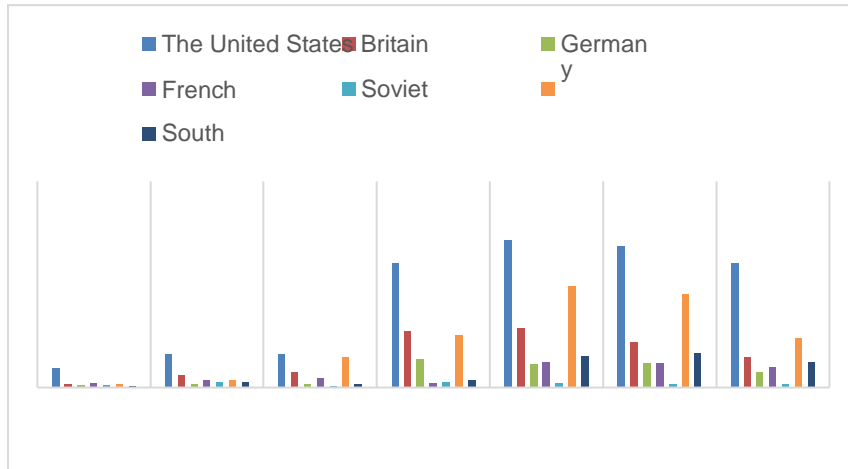


Figure 5. Changes in the number of national research documents from 1979 to 2019

Seventh, judging from the changes in the number of documents on Chinese higher education in Japan, see [Figure. 5], as early as 1979 to 1984, although the overall number of documents was far less than that of the United States, the number of documents involving China was only lower than that of France (8 articles), on par with the United Kingdom (6 articles). Since 1991, the number of documents on Chinese higher education has increased significantly, second only to the United States (66 articles), up to 59; especially from 2003 to 2019, although the number has decreased, it is still higher than that of major European countries and South Korea, second only to the United States.

Eighth, as mentioned above, the data collected above includes not only academic or research papers, but also other forms of literature. To further investigate the development and changes of Japanese higher education research topics and research methods in the early period (1979~1984) and the most recent period (2015~2019), this article also collected and compiled the "University The related academic and research papers from 1979 to 1984 and 2015 to 2019 in The Collection mainly examine the changes in the academic research of Japanese higher education in the early and recent periods from the two aspects of the themes and methodology of these academic and research papers. "University Essays" was founded in 1973. This academic journal mainly publishes Japanese and English papers and translations. It is the first annual publication in Japan that specializes in higher education academic papers or academic research results. It is 24 years earlier than the journal "Higher Education Research" published by the Japanese Higher Education Association in 1997, and it can more systematically reflect the changes in Japanese higher education research in the past 47 years than other domestic journals related to higher education research.

As shown in [Table 3], first of all, judging from the changes in the number of macro-research and micro-research literature, the number of early macro-research literature was 51, and it was reduced to 33 in the most recent period. In the same period, the number of micro-research documents increased from 10 to 27. From the perspective of the changing trend of the number of academic or research papers, this result is almost completely consistent with the results of the previous database analysis and investigation, that is, the theme of academic or research papers changes from focusing on macro-research changes to focusing on micro-research. Secondly, from the perspective of changes in macro-research themes, there are the early studies on policies and systems, with 45 related documents out of 51. Although there are many related papers in the recent period, there are only 19 of the 33 papers. It is worth

emphasizing that there was no paper on university evaluation in the early period, but there were 10 papers on university evaluation in the most recent period. On the contrary, the number of papers related to theoretical research has been reduced from 4 in the early period to 0. At least this journal reflects the decline of higher education theoretical research in Japan. Third, judging from the changes in the number of micro-research literature, there are the early papers on general education and literacy education, 4 out of 10. In the most recent period, research papers related to university internationalization, university teachers, and academic professions are tied for the highest, with 7 papers. In addition to the decrease in the number of papers related to general education and liberalization education and the interface between high school and university, the number of research papers on other topics has increased. In particular, the number of papers related to the internationalization of universities, university students, university teachers, and academic professions has increased significantly.

Table 3. Changes in the themes of academic papers in "Collected Works of the University" (unit: piece)

Theme	1979-1984	2015-2019
Macro		
Theory	4	0
Policies, systems, etc.	45	19
Finance, appropriation, etc.	0	4
University evaluation	0	10
Subtotal	51	33
Micro		
University Internationalization	2	7
College Students	0	6
University teachers, academic professions	1	7
General education, liberal arts education	4	2
University governance	0	2
Teacher professional development	0	1
The connection between high school and university	2	1
Other	1	1
Subtotal	10	27
Total	61	60

Finally, there are changes in research methods. According to the relevant materials of "University Collection", except for some articles with unclear methodology or difficult to judge specific methodology, this article summarizes the main research methodology used in almost all academic papers in the early and recent periods, as shown in Table 4. The early academic papers on higher education mainly used historical methods (27 papers), followed by comparative methods (21 papers), followed by questionnaire survey methods (3 papers), and policy text analysis methods (3 papers). In contrast, the most used academic papers published in "University Essays" in the recent period is the questionnaire survey method (26 papers), followed by the statistical data analysis method (11), and the third is the historical method (7 papers). And Comparative Law (7 articles). In short, this change can be understood as the main use of qualitative analysis methods in the early stages of higher education research, mostly by sorting out historical materials and interpreting or introducing texts; after 2015, at

least published in the "University Collection" Most academic papers are based on quantitative methods such as national, regional or specific group surveys and statistical data. It is worth mentioning that the "Collectives of the University" published 11 translations related to higher education in the early period, and in the "Collectives of the University" published in the most recent period, there was only one English paper written by a British scholar and no translation. This also reflects a certain extent that early research paid more attention to introducing and learning from overseas experience, and in the most recent period, it has focused more on publishing academic papers based on its research results.

Table 4. Changes in the main research methods of academic papers in "University Essays"

Methodology	1979-1984	2015-2019
Historical law	27	7
Statistical data analysis	2	11
Comparative method	2	17
Questionnaire	3	26
Case analysis	2	0
Policy Analysis	3	3
Educational Economics and Educational Sociology	1	0
Economics	2	0
Histology	1	0
Interview method	0	3
Document Analysis	0	2

Based on the above analysis and discussion on the problems of Japanese higher education research in recent years, this article can be summarized as the following points. First of all, from the perspective of the research objects of international comparative education, in the early research, Japan not only paid attention to the study and introduction of the United States, but also paid attention to the higher education of the European countries, but then mainly focused on the United States; although in the late 1990s, it studied Asia, especially The literature in China and South Korea has increased sharply, but it seems that the study of higher education in continental Europe is not as important as in the early days [19]. Secondly, in recent years, due to the government's emphasis on reforms at the institution level, the competition among Japanese institutions of higher learning has become increasingly fierce, and more and more studies have focused on the reality of problems that need to be resolved at the institution level. Compared with the earlier period, higher education research places too much emphasis on applied research and individual problem research, and there is too little research on theory and methodology. Third, compared with earlier times, more and more researches, especially research on scientific research topics, tend to be influenced by policy-driven and policy changes, and pay more attention to the short-term and social effects of research. Many studies lack a long-term perspective. Exploring the theory of higher education with academic logic and seeking to solve common and common problems arising from the development and change of higher education [20]. Finally, in addition to the English version of papers published by the Japanese Educational Association and the annual English academic journal "Higher Education Forum" published by the Higher Education Research and Development Center of Hiroshima University, compared with other social sciences, the research on higher education in Japan in the past 40 years The authors use English to publish in domestic or international journals and the research results are not many, and they lack sufficient academic influence in the international arena. To a certain extent, the contribution

of Japanese higher education researchers to the international higher education academic community needs to be further improved.

5. Conclusion

Based on the above investigation and analysis, the main findings of this article can be summarized as follows.

First, since 1979, the number of documents on higher education research has continued to grow, reflecting that more and more government departments, institutions of higher learning, academic institutions, scientific researchers, scholars, or other stakeholders are committed to higher education research or focus on related research. In terms of quantity, at least, higher education research has not been a declining or less important field in Japan in the past 40 years. Secondly, Japan's higher education policy and higher education reform measure directly affect the subject content of higher education research and the changes in the number of documents. Due to the different focus of Japanese higher education research topics in different periods, the themes have changed significantly in different periods. Both macro and micro research can be relatively rapid, and to a large extent reflect the social environment, especially the impact of higher education reform policies on higher education institutions. To a certain extent, this reflects that Japanese higher education research generally pays more attention to the connection between research and external changes, has strong problem awareness, and emphasizes the practicality and pertinence of research.

Third, from the perspective of country studies, Japanese higher education, in general, has always attached importance to the study of the United States. However, since the late 1990s, the number of documents studying China and South Korea has been increasing, showing the comparison of Japanese higher education. The focus of research has gradually transitioned from the West, especially from the major countries of the European continent, to China and South Korea in East Asia.

Finally, from the perspective of changes in research methods, in the past 40 years, academic research seems to have gradually shifted from focusing on the sorting and interpretation of historical materials and texts to more quantitative research based on large-scale questionnaire survey data. In addition, compared with the earlier methods that focused on introducing and translating American scholars, academic research in recent years has emphasized originality and novelty.

There are many problems to be solved in this article. First of all, although Japan's two major public databases contain as much as possible almost all the data that can be disclosed in the country, there is currently no other effective method to verify the scientificity and objectivity of the data used in this article. Secondly, since there is no recognized standard for dividing the macro and micro research of higher education, and the content of some themes may overlap and overlap, can the macro and micro categories used in this article truly reflect the themes of Japanese higher education research over the past 40 years? The development and changes still need to be further demonstrated. Finally, this article does not make an in-depth analysis of the specific research content of higher education-related literature, so it is impossible to judge how the quality of Japanese higher education research has changed in the past 40 years. Compared with the earlier period, there is no international comparative research on the quality of the current Japanese higher education research. It is impossible to know how the quality or level of Japanese higher education research is compared with the countries and regions where international higher education research is more developed. All these need to be solved step by step in future research.

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