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# Learning Preferences of Remote Students in Japan: Cultural Factors

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**ABSTRAK**

Pendidikan jarak jauh di Jepang memiliki kerangka sejarah dan legislatif yang berbeda yang membedakannya dari banyak negara Barat. Diskusi dan penelitian telah dilakukan pada perbedaan gaya belajar antara individu Jepang dan Barat, yang dapat dikaitkan dengan perbedaan budaya dan sosial. E-learning merupakan bentuk pembelajaran jarak jauh yang menggunakan internet untuk memberikan instruksi dan memfasilitasi komunikasi antara pengajar dengan peserta didik atau antara peserta didik.. Ini semakin populer di pasar pendidikan tinggi di seluruh dunia, terutama di daerah-daerah di mana bahasa Inggris digunakan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk memberikan gambaran yang luas tentang keadaan pendidikan jarak jauh dan e-learning di Jepang, baik secara historis maupun saat ini. Bab ini juga akan mempelajari preferensi belajar biasa siswa Jepang dan menyelidiki metode dan sumber daya yang tepat untuk mengevaluasi gaya pembelajaran jarak jauh dan e-learning di Jepang. Tujuannya adalah untuk memeriksa bagaimana gaya belajar yang berbeda mempengaruhi kepuasan siswa dengan lingkungan belajar mereka.

*.ABSTRACT*

Distance learning in Japan has a distinct historical and legislative structure that differentiates it from several Western countries. Discussions and studies have been conducted on the variations in learning styles between Japanese and Western persons, which can be associated with cultural and socioeconomic differences. E-learning is a type of remote education that utilizes the Internet to deliver instruction and enable Interaction among educators and learners, or amongst learners. It is gaining popularity in the international higher education industry, especially in regions where English is used. This study attempts to provide a broad overview of the current state of remote education and e-learning in Japan, including its historical development. This chapter will also examine the typical learning preferences of Japanese students and explore appropriate approaches and resources for assessing distance learning styles and e-learning in Japan. The objective is to investigate how various learning styles affect students' contentment with their learning environment.

## INTRODUCTION

Distance learning is an educational approach where students can register for courses without the need to physically attend classes at the campus. This technique has been present in Japan for the

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past five decades. However, in contrast to the growth of distant learning in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

In Japan, numerous distance learning programs continue to adhere to a correspondence school model and primarily rely on postal services to deliver instruction, despite the existence of information and communication technologies. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Due to the widespread use of the Internet, online learning has become popular in several regions of the world. including Japan. However, in Japan, e-learning is still not as advanced as the three Western countries previously mentioned, not regarding the technology utilised, but concerning the successful execution of new instructional approaches that promote collective knowledge development through interactive media like the Internet.

Japanese may be less receptive to Western techniques to distant learning or e-learning due to variations in learning preferences between individuals in Japan and individuals in Western countries. While there is still limited scientific data supporting these differences, anecdotal experiences from individuals who have been educated in both cultures indicate that such discrepancies do occur. Based on prior study, Hayes and Allison stated that there are differences in learning preferences due to cultural variables. These differences arise because a country's culture influences how individuals acquire knowledge in educational environments.. De Vita also proposes that culture has an impact on the formation of learning styles. If there are variations in learning preferences caused by cultural influences, Future distance education and e-learning systems in Japan should be built differently from those in Western countries, rather than merely copying and adopting their approaches.

The sections that follow are: 1) The current and past situations regarding distance education and e-learning in Japan, 2) the learning methods commonly used by Japanese students, and 3) appropriate approaches and tools for evaluating the learning of distance students or e-Learners in Japan, aiming to assess the influence of the learning method on student satisfaction with their learning environment.

## METHOD

### Reseach Design

In Japan, the origins of remote education may be traced back to the late 19th century when "reading marks" were used in higher education. In the Meiji era, when higher education was not well organized in Japan and no Japanese-language books were available, the only way to gain knowledge was through the Resource that students could rely on was a written record of information delivered during academic sessions conducted by instructors. As a result, "read notations" are created and used by students who are not enrolled in the degree program for their studies. Waseda University, a leading private university in Japan, is generally recognized as the first to adopt this approach. Students that utilise "readmarks" for their academic pursuits have the opportunity to sit for the examination and obtain a certificate of achievement. During that period, individuals who were unable to participate in college courses in Tokyo continued their studies through this way and took the exam to obtain certification. This is regarded as the beginning of "letter education" or distance education in Japan.

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## FINDING & DISCUSSION

### History

In 1950, schools offering correspondence or remote learning programs were created for the first time. With official recognition from the Ministry of Education, schools that have received accreditation are permitted to grant degrees to their pupils. According to the Japanese Higher Education Council, this marks the start of remote education in Japanese universities.. Since then, the Ministries of Education of Japan have implemented There are two distinct accreditation systems or sets of standards for universities: one for traditional colleges located on campus and another for online education.

Most of the distance learning in Japan is done by sending printed materials through the mail. While a distant learning program that is officially recognized can grant degrees, it is still mandatory to fulfill 30 credits out of a total of 124 credits needed to obtain a bachelor's degree through in-person class It is still required to complete 30 credits out of a total of 124 credits necessary to earn a bachelor's degree through in-person classes (often referred to as formal education) also known as formal education. In March 1998, the government modified the stipulation that registrants must complete a minimum of 30 credits through private classes. These 30 credits can be obtained using synchronous mediation communication, such as video conferencing. Starting from March 2001, it became possible to obtain 30 credits by participating in online activities. It enables anyone to obtain a degree entirely through remote education, without the need to physically attend a school or study facility.

Furthermore, online learning postgraduate programs became accessible in March 2001. Formal recognition was provided and four remote learning programmes for postgraduate students were formed the following year. In the year 2003, online PhD programs in science started to gain prominence. At first, online education programs were seen as less significant than traditional on-campus programs. Nevertheless, the concept has gradually evolved, and there has been speculation that the regulatory disparities between traditional schools and distance learning institutions may soon diminish.

### Current state of distance education in Japan

Currently, there are 35 higher education institutions that provide four-year distance education programmes, together with 18 postgraduate schools and nine junior colleges. These organizations have a student population of more than 280,000. All of them, with the exception of Air University, are privately owned universities.

Out of the 62 establishments, just two are online educational institutions that lack a physical campus apart from administrative offices and study centers. The 60 institutes that are still in existence are really the distant learning departments of the well-known university.

Several remote education institutions continue to function as correspondence schools, where courses are delivered through self-study utilizing printed materials supplied by mail, along with certain educational prerequisites. The extent of interaction between students and instructors is restricted and there is no structured chance for students to engage with each other. Student assessment is commonly conducted through monthly progress reports provided by students and through examinations administered both on campus and at their learning center at the conclusion of the course.

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Several correspondence schools are actively attempting to transition to online schools, However, only six out of the 34 distance education schools at the undergraduate level have an online learning management system (LMS). This learning management system platform enables students to engage with their peers, Ask teachers or staff members, schedule their classes, submit assignments, and get further course materials. Despite the government's rule modification in 2001 that permitted the substitution of the 30-credit requirement of private class teaching with Internet-based education, the majority of institutions continue to provide their programs in the conventional format of study materials sent by mail and private schools.

**Current state of E-learning in Japan**

E-Learning in Japan has a strong connection with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT), which has offered significant assistance.E-learning in higher education institutions in Japan was introduced as part of an e-Japan program that was planned and publicized in January 2001. The initiative has a clearly defined objective, which is to increase the number of Japanese universities that utilize current e-learning technology by three times by 2005. MEXT enhanced the acceptance of a maximum of 60 credits obtained through e-Learning for degree programs in higher education institutions in March 2001, with the aim of promoting the utilization of e-Learning.

Japanese higher education institutions are gradually beginning to adopt e-learning. In a study done in 2005 by the National Institute of Multimedia Education (2006), it was discovered that 41.4% of the private schools polled offered e-learning classes, while 69.3% of the national institutions answered by providing e-Learning programs. Overall, 36.3% of the universities that were surveyed offered e-learning classes. Regarding online learning approaches, 31.4% of participants utilized e-Learning as part of a blended learning approach, while 20.8% incorporated e-Learning alongside traditional classroom activities. Only 10% of the individuals surveyed offered classes that could be accessed without being physically present.

Participants were also requested to provide feedback on the obstacles that could impede the advancement of e-learning at the university level in Japan. The primary reasons cited are the faculty's insufficient proficiency in content creation and system management (61.9 percent), followed by a lack of knowledge and skills in developing e-learning systems (50 percent), limited understanding of the educational impact among faculty members (49.7 percent), concerns about the security of intellectual property rights for content uploaded to the electronic learning system (44.5 percent), and budget limitations. 42.4 percent.

Regarding the development of e-learning materials, 30.8 percent of participants indicated that they produced content within their own educational institution. Roughly half of the information was generated by faculty members as their own contributions. In terms of the tools utilized in e-learning, there has been a rise in the utilization of educational resources generated using presentation software like Microsoft PowerPoint and video streaming over the past four years. Nevertheless, there has been a decline in the utilization of text-based interactive platforms like discussion boards and chats. This indicates that e-learning in Japan is experiencing a transition towards patterns resembling those of traditional correspondence schools, where students engage in more independent learning with minimal interaction with teachers and peers.

Distance learning in Japan is built upon a strong foundation of correspondence education. Despite advancements in technology and the relaxation of restrictions, distance education colleges

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are now permitted to offer online degree programs. However, just a small number of institutions in Japan are genuinely making an effort to do so. Online learning is also being offered by higher education institutions and traditional colleges in Japan. However, the majority of them offer online learning in addition to traditional classroom teaching, by making lecture materials accessible on the internet or providing access to recorded lecture videos. This technology is not utilized to improve or promote communication between teachers and students or among students in either scenario. Instead, it is employed to broaden possibilities for self-directed learning. Despite being the largest distance education institution in Japan, the University of Air has not transitioned away from a traditional broadcast-based curriculum.

**Characteristic of Japanese learner**

In the preceding section, we discussed the obstacles and opportunities that distant education in Japan encounters in the sphere of education. Currently, there is no available research on the experiences of Japanese students studying remotely.

Due to it, we have a keen interest in conducting research of a similar nature. This section will assess your comprehension of the Japanese student's attitude to learning in general. The research will encompass studies conducted in several disciplines, such as management, ethnography, psychology, and education. The emphasis was on assessing the impact of cultural influences on learning styles, primarily through the utilization of three cultural characteristics. Geert Hofstede (2001) was used as a framework for organizing this study.

The idea that cultural influence impacts how students approach their learning or their learning styles is not new and may generate discussion, while there are difficulties regarding its assessment and application. Several educators who work with diverse groups of individuals have noticed cultural variations, and there are informal accounts of these variations in literature. (McCarty, 2005; McVeigh, 2002). In addition, it is reasonable to suppose that if culture influences values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior in a certain context, it will also have an impact on education. As the primary educational approach shifts from focusing on subjects and teachers to prioritizing students, there is a growing curiosity in comprehending the variations in individual learning preferences.

Student learning might vary due to internal characteristics such as personality, age, gender, or external factors like country culture, discipline culture, or workplace environment. When it comes to learning, our primary emphasis is on the exterior elements of the Curry model (1983). The layers consist of inclinations towards particular teaching characteristics and social interactions, which are shaped by cultures through activities like educating youngsters, exposure to media, and involvement in educational institutions.

When examining a comprehensive analysis of Japanese culture, Hofstede's renowned research during the 1960s and 1970s discovered significant differences among national cultures in four key areas. Actually, Japanese and other Asian cultures hold a distinct position compared to America, Canada, Britain, and Australia when it comes to four dimensions. These discoveries have sparked much discussion and investigation throughout the last four decades. In addition to criticisms of Hofstede's findings that are considered outdated, do not encompass the current national cultural diversity, and can be misused to oversimplify diverse cultures, this analysis will examine relevant findings and studies from different disciplines to gain insight into the perspectives of

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Japanese students on learning, including their attitudes towards learning and the anticipated roles of students and teachers

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**Japan- High uncertainly avoidance**

One of the key discoveries of Hofstede's study on Japan is that in comparison to other nations, Japanese individuals have a tendency to minimize ambiguity. Consequently, individuals experience anxiety in situations that they see as being less organized, clear, or foreseeable. (1997, page 113). In a study conducted by Yamazaki in 2005, a connection was discovered between the inclination to avoid ambiguity and the propensity to engage in thoughtful consideration prior to taking action. In a study carried out by Kayes (2005) that examined the learning preferences of American and Japanese managers using LSI Kolb, it was discovered that Japanese men have an inclination towards practical thinking and action, whereas US managers tend to be more inclined towards theoretical thinking and proactive behavior. The findings align with McMurray's (1998) research on Japanese university students, in which a reexamination of Yamazaki's data uncovered notable trends in two comparable areas: thoughtful observation (TO) and practical experience. Common Era.

In a study that compared several cultures (Thomas, Cox, and Kojima, 2000), it was discovered that Japanese persons exhibit a preference for learning that emphasizes outcomes. This choice is akin to their inclination to steer away of ambiguity and seek explicit direction, well-defined objectives, and organized preparation.

Additional investigation uncovers a prevalent inclination among Japanese folks to steer clear of uncertainty. Lynn and Yang Based on Hampton's study in 1975, there is a noticeable connection between anxiety and the inclination to evade uncertainty. Out of the 18 countries, Japan has the second highest level of emergency. A recent research conducted by Gudykunst, Yang, and Nishida (1987) discovered that Japanese students experience higher levels of social anxiety compared to US students who have lower rates. Lastly, Vishwanath (2003) investigated the online auction conduct in three nations: the United States, Germany, and Japan.

The goal is to assess if Hofstede's findings regarding individuals' tendency to avoid ambiguity will be evident in their purchasing and selling actions. A product that is exactly the same is available for sale on the eBay page in every country, and it has the same amount of information offered. The bid amount and ultimate cost of the items sold are connected to the index of uncertainty avoidance in each country, with Japanese buyers being the most cautious among the three groups, and American purchasers being the least cautious. The outcomes of education in Japan involve a tendency to steer clear of uncertainty. An example is that students typically opt for well-organized educational experiences, with explicit course responsibilities and prerequisites. Students who have a tendency to shun uncertainty prefer to search for "correct" answers instead of participating in conversations about diverse viewpoints. This is apparent due to the focus in Japanese education on getting kids ready for university entrance exams.

Moreover, individuals who have a tendency to avoid uncertainty may frequently have confusion or concern regarding their comprehension of the topic or assignment. Thus, it appears that issues might readily emerge in distant educational settings that lack face-to-face communication, as it becomes more challenging to ascertain if pupils have misunderstood and more difficult for them to seek clarifications on the assignment. Morse (2003), in a study comparing the attitudes of Australians and a mixed group of online Asian students, discovered that the majority of

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Asian students in his study believed that "instructors should respond promptly to student input to enhance communication accuracy," whereas only one-third of Western students in his research held the same perspective. In summary, students who have a tendency to avoid uncertainty may require distance courses that are well-organized and clear advice from lecturers to help them understand activities.

**Assesing learning preference of remote students in Japan**

There are numerous techniques employed to assess learning preferences in various ways. The literature on learning provides numerous conceptual models and structures that may be unexpected for anyone seeking to understand how to study.

The key to accomplishing the objectives of learning style research is to select the suitable instruments for a certain intention. In this study, there are three objectives: immediate objectives, intermediate objectives, and long-term objectives. An important goal is to evaluate the preferences of distance learning students in Japan to understand the connection between their learning style preferences and their level of satisfaction in the learning environment. The main goal is to examine the learning approaches of students who study remotely and students who study on campus in Japan to ascertain if there are any disparities between the two groups.

In the future, the research aims to explore the preferences of students from other cultures about distant learning. This includes Japanese distance students as well as distance students from other nations, particularly Western countries. Understanding the diversity of learning styles among students from different nations can assist remote learning program providers in the global higher education industry.Curry (1983) put up a model to organize many notions and ideas of learning styles, which includes internal and exterior levels, representing three overall layers of "learning or cognitive styles." The innermost level of its existence comprises a cognitive personality model, the intermediate level is made up of an information-processing style model, and the upper level consists of an instructional preference model. In the study we presented, we were curious about how the process of learning can be altered.

The innermost level, though, is not important since it represents a personality that is mostly stable and unable to be altered. The external layers, instructional preferences, may not be very important in this study since students can only modify their teaching preferences if needed. Kolb's Learning Styles Inventory (LSI) is a widely used framework for understanding different approaches to learning and is considered an important instrument in Curry's intermediate approach. The advantages of utilizing the Kolb tool are its extensive usage and its frequent inclusion in numerous studies on learning styles. The results, as utilized in some research, can readily be compared to findings from other investigations. This is advantageous since it is quite demanding and necessitates a significant amount of exertion to engage in cross-cultural investigations of learning preferences. Furthermore, as proposed by Yamazaki (2005), there is a correlation between the attributes of the Kolb learning style model and the cultural factors indicated by Hofstede. The Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ), which is based on Kolb's theory and was developed by Honey and Mumford (1992), could be beneficial and easier to comprehend compared to Kolb's tool. This is due to the LSQ's utilization of Likert type scales instead of sentence completion possibilities.

Most students have to adhere to a specific learning style in a specific setting, regardless of their inherent inclinations, because typically the education system is unable to accommodate the diverse learning style preferences of all students. Many students who opt for online education do so

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because it is the most appropriate or the sole available alternative for them to acquire the necessary education. However, frequently the educational system is not adjusted to accommodate the diverse learning preferences of all the pupils. In remote education in Japan, there is a notable absence of interaction between professors and students, as well as among students. A strong level of motivation is necessary for a student to effectively finish the course. Certain students may have a preference for a learning style that is not compatible with this learning environment.

As previously said, Japanese students typically choose a structured learning setting, appreciate precise instructions, and promote active engagement with their peers. The current distance education system in Japan, which follows a correspondence school model, is suitable for students who desire a structured learning environment. However, it is unclear to what degree this environment is appropriate for addressing the varied requirements of pupils. Evaluating the preferences of students in Japan about distance learning can offer insights into the potential development of online learning systems in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Distance learning in Japan has a unique historical and legal structure that sets it apart from other Western nations. The variations in learning preferences between Japan and Western countries have been a topic of conversation and study. It can be ascribed to the cultural and social disparities that exist between them. E-learning is a type of distant learning that typically uses the Internet to deliver education and enable communication between teachers and students, or between students. It is gaining popularity in the global high-level education sector, particularly in English-speaking countries. The study is to present a summary of the past and present state of remote education and e-learning in Japan. The research will also explore the overall learning preferences of Japanese students and analyze suitable approaches and resources to assess the learning styles of students who are studying remotely and using e-Learning in Japan. The goal is to examine how various learning styles impact student satisfaction with their learning environments.

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