

Enriching Classroom Experience in Tandem with Teaching Assistant

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Enriching Classroom Experience in Tandem with Teaching Assistant

Greetings on Arrival from FD Director and Efforts for the Teaching Assistant System

Kenya Kubo

Director, Faculty Development

I, Kenya Kubo, was appointed Director of Faculty Development (FD) in April 2013. After teaching 11 and a half years at ICU, I must say that I am neither confident of my lectures and practice in lab courses, nor am I driven by a strong will to share with you new ideas I have come up with. My lectures and lab guidance's derive from my predecessors and colleagues; I have merely copied what I could, and there is nothing in particular that I am proud of. Of course, I wish I could reflect on my career as a member of FD, and use the remaining time wisely. However, the very reason I have accepted to become the Director was my small hope that maybe I could help in some way to improve the environment for the faculties (and staff and students too, if possible) here at ICU, so faculties would be able to yield maximum results with minimum time and effort.

I dedicate most of my time for education, research, and other administrative duties. I cannot help but feel that my time and efforts are spent very inefficiently. And because of this, occasionally I feel my motivation is wasting away. Many meetings seem to lack necessary members. There are so many obscure rules that prevent us from trying something new. We are made to fill in numerous forms without knowing how we are supposed to fill in the blanks. And many documents cause déjà vu. Some computer softwares are way too complicated to convey our thoughts, and we cannot use them unless we continuously curse at the screen. Of course, in many cases, it is my own weakness that is causing the unpleasantness. I often make wrong

decisions on what documents to submit, and I would cause unnecessary trouble by forgetting how to fill in the forms. Still, I am sure that FD Newsletter will never have to suffer to gather enough articles as soon as it chooses to call for the list of complaints and discontents from the faculty.

I believe it is also part of the FD's activity to secure time and effort (and motivation) that can be allocated for the true purpose of FD, which is to improve the actual courses, by helping set up an environment that is more efficient. I hope I could help realize such environment, step by step, by addressing issues that are not always directly connected with lectures.

I used to believe in the ideal that "if you are not happy with something, you should start something on your part to change it". For example, I have designed and distributed the useful "ICU triangle calendar" until year 2003. However, in recent years, I have stopped doing so because I have lost the balance between my zeal for creation and uncomfortableness deriving from inconvenience. But I still believe that useful resources should be shared by everyone, so I have requested the staff to upload the "ICU glossary" designed by professor Yoshikazu Hongo (which has been around for a while, but was not updated for long) online. Thanks to the powerful administration staff, people around me have been very active, regardless of my own sluggishness. Like the eye of a typhoon, I am just following the wind blowing around me.

When I was appointed Director, Anri Morimoto,

Vice President for Academic Affairs, has explained to me that the TA system at ICU, which already existed in 1958, could be the earliest example in Japan. From the beginning of its history, ICU has been aggressive to improve the quality of its education. The present system was introduced as the result of the reform in 2008. It has made a good progress, and is welcomed by many students. However, we are now aware of some room for improvements, and we believe some changes should be made to increase efficiency and productivity.

At the end of every term, TAs submit their logs. In the comments section, TAs have pointed out many issues. For example, some TAs testify that they have to work much longer hours while they are paid the equal amount, while other TAs are burdened with duties that are not to be expected from TAs to begin with. And although it is part of the TA system that while supporting the class management, the TAs are to be trained in a way that they will be able to give their own lectures so as to prepare themselves for their future careers, some TAs receive no training whatsoever from the instructors.

Many of these problems spawn from the fact that instructors are free to assign duties to the TAs, once the TAs are allocated with certain points in accordance with their expected working hours. Since graduate students are valuable human resources, and since they are hired with university budget, we should have at least asked the instructors to be accountable with their plans as to what kind of work they will assign the TAs, in a certain amount of time in accordance with the points allocated, and how they intend to train the TAs. TAs, at the same time, should have been notified with this information.

In the current reform, we have decided to start from square one, and asked the instructors to submit the appointment planning sheet. Although this seems to contradict with our interest in cutting down faculties' chores, the said form is to be submitted only once, for each course, as long as there are no alterations. The information provided will be shared with the TAs. We expect this will improve the treatment of TAs, and reinforce their will to contribute to the courses.

Also, before the said reform, General Education courses hired students who would help with simpler tasks and paperwork, who were called Teaching Helpers. Unlike TAs, these students helped with tasks such as handing out the comment sheets. In the current reform, we are reviving this position under the name Classroom Supporter (CS). From now on, depending on the course, it will be possible to hire an assistant or assistants with either title, or to hire both at once.

If we are to take a look at the TA system from an administrative point of view rather than that of faculty, it is clear that not only should we pay more attention to manage the working hours of TAs that are simply logged with a single sheet of paper per term, but we also have to start making other decisions as well, such as how long should we extend the contract of TAs, in accordance with the new Labor Contract Act that was enforced in April 2013.

In this issue of FD Newsletter, many faculty members have shared their own experiences of hiring a TA, or working as a TA, and what they expect from TAs. I sincerely hope to improve the education at ICU by gathering the ideas and opinions from wide range of people, including faculty, graduate students who will work as TAs, and administrative staff.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Summary of Results of 2nd TA/LA Survey

Total Number of TAs/LAs in Spring Term 2013 (Total Sampling Body) : 127

Number of Respondents : 61 (48.0%)

Survey Deadline : 12 June - 1 July 2013

Survey Method : Responses accepted via web, portal and email

1. How many students were in the course that you were appointed to?

	responses	rate
less than 10	6	6.3%
10 ~ 19	15	15.8%
20 ~ 49	39	41.1%
50 ~ 99	19	20.0%
100 ~ 149	12	12.6%
more than 150	4	4.2%
total	95	100.0%

2. What percentage of your work as a TA or LA required your expertise?

	responses	rate
more than 80%	38	40.0%
60 ~ 79%	14	14.7%
40 ~ 59%	10	10.5%
20 ~ 39%	17	17.9%
less than 20%	16	16.8%
total	95	100.0%

3. During the class, what was the percentage of your work as a TA or LA?

	responses	rate
more than 80%	19	20.2%
60 ~ 79%	9	9.6%
40 ~ 59%	15	16.0%
20 ~ 39%	17	18.1%
less than 20%	34	36.2%
total	94	100.0%

4. Did you have to work outside of class hours?

	responses	rate
Yes	80	83.3%
Not at all	16	16.7%
total	96	100.0%

If “Yes”, how many hours per class hour did you work?

	responses	rate
less than 0.5 hr.	8	10.7%
0.5 hr.	10	13.3%
1.0 hr.	24	32.0%
1.5 hr.	5	6.7%
2.0 hr.	12	16.0%
2.5 hr.	0	0.0%
3.0 hr.	7	9.3%
3.5 hr.	1	1.3%
4.0 hr.	3	4.0%
5.0 hr.	0	0.0%
more than 6.0 hr.	2	2.7%
others	3	4.0%
total	75	100.0%

If “Yes”, how many hours did you work during the term?

	responses	rate
less than 10 hr.	17	23.0%
more than 10 hr.	17	23.0%
more than 20 hr.	17	23.0%
more than 30 hr.	5	6.8%
more than 40 hr.	4	5.4%
more than 50 hr.	3	4.1%
more than 60 hr.	4	5.4%
more than 70 hr.	2	2.7%
others	5	6.8%
total	74	100.0%

5. Did the students benefit (enhancing teaching effectiveness) from your appointment as TA of LA?

	responses	rate
Absolutely	31	33.0%
To a certain extent	56	59.6%
Not much	6	6.4%
Not at all	1	1.1%
total	94	100.0%

6. Will the appointment as TA or LA benefit your future research or teaching career?

	responses	rate
[Research] Very much	43	44.8%
A little	40	41.7%

Not much	11	11.5%
Not at all	2	2.1%
total	96	100.0%

[Education]		
Very much	72	75.0%
A little	18	18.8%
Not much	4	4.2%
Not at all	2	2.1%
total	96	100.0%

7. The following is a list of examples of work done by TA and LA. Check the box for education and research if you think the activity assists education and research. Check the box for clerical assistance if you consider the activity assists that other than education and research. Make your judgment according to your own ideas. Also answer whether as a TA of LA you want to do that activity or not.

	Research and Education	Clerical
Help answer students' questions	60	0
Assist group discussions	59	1
Help lead labs/ practical training	57	3
Help analyze comment sheets	54	5
Assist making class materials	49	11
Assist class plan, compiling syllabi	48	12
Operational support in e-learning tools	37	21
Assist grading quizzes and reports	37	22
Check attendance	26	33
Assist supervising exams	22	37
Distribute/collect class materials and comment sheets	20	39
Operate IT/AV equipment	18	41
Assist uploading syllabi	13	45
Set up equipment	13	47
Assist putting away equipment and teaching materials	12	48
Make copies of handouts	10	49
Reserve class equipment	9	51

※ Arranged in descending order of “Research and Education” responses

As TA/LA,	I want to do it	I don't want to do it
Assist group discussions	56	2
Help lead labs/ practical training	55	5
Help answer students' questions	55	5
Help analyze comment sheets	50	9
Distribute/collect class materials and comment sheets	49	10
Assist making class materials	48	12
Check attendance	46	13
Operational support in e-learning tools	44	14
Reserve class equipment	43	17
Operate IT/AV equipment	43	16
Assist grading quizzes and reports	43	15
Assist class plan, compiling syllabi	41	19
Set up equipment	41	18
Make copies of handouts	38	21
Assist putting away equipment and teaching materials	37	23
Assist supervising exams	36	23
Assist uploading syllabi	28	30

※ Arranged in descending order of “I want to” responses

Enriching Classroom Experience in Tandem with TA

TA at ICU: The Past and the Future

Anri Morimoto

Vice President for Academic Affairs

The Teaching Assistant system at ICU is widely recognized as the first example of its kind among the post-war Japanese universities. Although the date of its introduction was believed to be in 1968, I have recently learned from an alumna, to our surprise, that TA system was already up and running a decade earlier, in 1958. It was Tazuko Ueno, professor emerita of Tokyo Woman's Christian University and chairperson of NPO Research Institute for Japanese Language Education, who has enlightened us as a member of the second graduating class. After her graduation at 1958, Professor Ueno moved on to the ICU Graduate School, where she served as a TA for undergraduate courses. Giving lectures and grading the students were part of her job, for which she was compensated by an exemption from tuition. This experience, she says, has later helped her immensely when she studied abroad in the University of Michigan. This valuable testimony not only forces us to set the historical record right, but at the same time, urges us to recognize once again the significance of the future role ICU should play in improving the TA system.

As we have discussed at faculty meetings on several occasions, we can expect fruitful outcomes from the TA reform, such as enrichment and cooperation

within undergraduate courses, while providing training and support for graduate school students. In a small private university like us, it is crucial to maintain a close knit between the undergraduate and graduate schools, and TAs could definitely mediate the two. Fortunately, we are seeing progress in designing the new system, thanks to the leadership of FD director Kenya Kubo and the eager support from Academic Affairs office staff. The FD working team has gathered feedbacks from students and faculty members, and constructed a new system in accordance with examples found in universities in and outside of Japan. We also spent significant amount of time to check the system's compatibility with the relevant domestic laws. I sincerely hope you could appreciate the great amount of background effort the team has put into the reform suggestion that was submitted in writing.

Naturally confusion might arise during the transition. But this would not be the first time for ICU to walk the unmapped road, and ICU takes pride in the fact that it has served as a model for many other universities. I humbly ask for your understanding and cooperation in order to enrich our education.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

The Necessity of the TA System as a Training Opportunity for Educators

Natsumi Ikoma

Department of Art, Literature and Music

In the recent efforts towards the reformation of the TA system, we must always bear in mind that TA system is also an opportunity to train the graduate students, who would one day become educators at universities. TA, for graduate students, is not merely

a part-time job. TAs must observe closely and learn what they cannot learn in teacher-training courses: how the class must be managed; how the class must be designed and presented; what kind of assignments must be given out; and how should the students be

graded in a fair manner. The reform must take these matters into consideration to maximize the opportunity for TAs, and faculties must assign TAs their duties with the awareness that they are in fact training the future faculties.

That being said, it is favorable to enable the TAs to practice a session during class, so as to allow them to take part in teaching, as the name Teaching Assistant suggests. Under the current rule, TAs are not allowed to act as “substitutes” of the faculties. Even so, however, I believe the TAs should be allowed to make a guest lecture, or at least to host a group session. In Harvard University, each class is divided into two parts: the lecture by the faculty is followed by the group session with smaller number of students led by TAs. This system seems plausible since students find it easier to pose questions to the TA to clarify whatever doubts they might have, and naturally, TAs would participate in the class with stronger will to teach, which is an attitude crucial for their future career. The faculties would also be able to learn from the TAs the progress of each student, for it is often difficult for the faculty to keep an eye on every student in the class. This, naturally, will help pacing the course properly. In the case above, more than two TAs must be appointed for the courses with large number of students. The current point system manages the TAs’ workload by the amount of time, and pays them by the hour. This system, however, is more suitable for simpler tasks. In order to allow TAs to take part in the actual teaching process, the system must be altered so the payment would be calculated by the type of duty assigned to them. The work of teaching should not be computed by the hour to begin with. The new payment protocol should suit the purpose better.

The newly suggested binary assistant system involving TAs and Classroom Supporters (CSs), is designed to designate the assistants by the fact whether their duty involves technical knowledge or not. I personally find this distinction rather vague. It is not easy to tell which part of the duty “involves technical knowledge” while the other part does not. Even a simple task, such as designing a handout, would be carried out more efficiently by an assistant who has sufficient knowledge. Moreover, making handouts is definitely a part of “education” as a whole, and it is in fact an ability necessary to become a university faculty.

Therefore, I think it is better to define TAs as those who clearly “take part in education”. This definition should differentiate TAs from CSs more evidently. The two assistants are not interchangeable, and many courses with TAs at the moment will need help from CSs as well.

Such system, however, could have some difficulties. For example, it could prove troublesome to secure enough graduate students with same concentration with the faculty who can properly assist the course, especially with the small size of the graduate school at ICU. At the moment, many students are assisting the courses that are outside of their specific fields. If the TA system could be reformed into a plausible training process of future faculties, it could become one of the perquisites in learning at ICU’s graduate school.

As for CSs, it could be favorable to station them at the office so they can pick up their duties on an on-demand basis. Present system requires a course to have certain number of students in order to hire a TA, and TA points are allocated in a similar manner. If we are to switch over to the TA/CS system, the faculty should be able to assign his/her own TAs, while the CSs should be able to assist any course at any moment.

One of the advantages of such system is that CSs and TAs would be able to learn from each other’s jobs. Secondly, although CSs would be concerned with duties outside his/her specific fields, it will never harm them to learn new ideas and methods, for example by designing a handout. And thirdly, such system can merit the mental health of graduate students, who tend to spend much time alone. It would be a great opportunity for them to mingle with students outside their fields. All in all, the reformation of the TA system should take into consideration the nurturing of graduate students, rather than concentrating on the convenience of the faculties.

A graduate school student, who also has the experience as TA, personally told me that it would be great to have an opportunity of lecturing or leading a group session. Of course, it would be crucial to set up a consultation service for TAs to make sure that crushing labor or exploitation do not enter the scene, and any other trouble should be closely monitored and solved. Let me add that I have also received demands concerning this point from number of TAs.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

TAs and Course Development at ICU

Walter Dawson

Department of Education

A recent meeting I had with an international student brought to light some of the issues concerning the current discussion of the TA system at ICU. This student had, as an undergraduate, participated greatly in student advocacy groups at UC-Berkeley and was eager to take on similar roles during graduate studies at ICU, perceiving this as an integral part of student life and the learning experience as a partner in the university community. I was not surprised to hear of such mechanisms for student involvement in a renowned liberal institution like UC-Berkeley, but I was impressed by this student's need for such involvement to the degree that she yearned and thus demanded such opportunities at ICU. In my early career as a researcher I studied student government in Japanese junior high schools; therefore, the relationship between school life, participation, and political socialization was not a new topic for me. In fact, I originally pursued this research in the hope that the schooling experience might provide opportunities for students to become more active citizens and invigorate democracy. ICU is an institution which was founded on many ideals, one of which being the mission of establishing an academic community based on democratic ideals; however, I would venture to say that student participation in many aspects of university life is sorely lacking. The current discussion of the TA system at ICU has potential to re-examine the relationship between faculty and students and provide more avenues for meaningful participation of students in the formulation and implementation of courses as components in all academic programs. It is my hope that I may contribute to this discussion by relating my experience as a TA at Teachers College, Columbia University.

My TA Experience at Teachers College

Teachers College, Columbia University is the graduate school of education of Columbia University. Columbia University, like most ivy league universities, does not have an undergraduate department or major in education which is, in and of itself, a sad statement on the status of the teaching profession in the U.S. As

such my experience at Teachers College was limited to TAing and teaching classes at the graduate level. (My hope is that, as part of this discussion, other ICU faculty with TA experience at the undergraduate level at other institutions may also contribute their thoughts to enrich our discussion.)

I was a TA for two separate courses at Teachers College, those being Comparative and International Education (a required course for all masters students) and International Education and Planning: Civic Literacy. My advisor, who was the instructor for both courses, appointed four TAs for the former course as it was a course with a large enrollment. Thus each TA was assigned to a discussion section of about 12 students in order to provide a smaller venue for student discussion related to lectures and readings. We, as TAs, were also encouraged to act as mentors for first year students for their writing of reports to train them in academic writing in preparation for future research and international development careers. This discussion section was invaluable for me as it provided me with the training in preparing and leading class discussions, which is also an important part of a liberal arts education at ICU. Many students were current or former employees of the UN, The World Bank, and grassroots NGOs, so the discussions became quite lively and it was very rewarding to provide an open forum where students could debate free from the power relations which dictate status and influence between their various organizations. I am sure that the students came away from this experience with their preconceptions challenged and a renewed passion for development work. As rewarding as this experience was, it was the latter course where I feel that I cut my teeth to prepare myself for course development as a university instructor.

The creation of the course titled Civic Literacy actually resulted from my discussion with my advisor about my own interest in civic education and the role that education can play in the democratization process. My concentration in my Ph.D. program was in Political Science and I was able to take numerous courses at both the School of International

and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the Political Science Department at Columbia University. Many courses such as Democratization in East Asia and Human Rights Education piqued my interest in pursuing further research on the relationship between school experiences and political socialization in Japan and other Asian nations. After expressing such an interest to my advisor, I was shocked when she said, "OK. You go ahead and create the course." I was overwhelmed with the task of developing a syllabus from scratch, finding the most important literature in that field, and thinking up assignments which would integrate the content with the learning experience. Of course, my advisor did not leave me alone to my travails, but did what many great teachers do to facilitate learning. She pushed me to take on a challenge which was far beyond my means and talents and realize my limitations. This experience is still vivid in my memory whenever I go about the task of formulating a new course or improving existing courses. Once I approached her exasperated at my inability to create the course on my own, we met weekly to discuss potential reading, classroom activities, and other ideas to create the course. In all honesty, I must say that the first year of the course was a bit bumpy, in that students often expected me to be an expert with all

the answers and I again realized my own limitations. Nevertheless, I am happy to say that in the second year of the course, the instructor made several important revisions to the course and it was truly beautiful to see a course come together so nicely.

Reflections for the ICU TA System

The most vivid experience as a TA at Teachers College was the moment when my advisor told me to create a new course. That moment was one of those shocking instances of learning, a pedagogical thunderbolt in a sense. I hope that this experience may provide some food for thought for our faculty at ICU. I think that we leave little room for TA involvement in course development at ICU, and it is, in fact, that aspect of TA work which might provide them with an invaluable experience to train them as future teachers and researchers. That is not to say that all graduate students will go on to become teachers. Nevertheless, there is much to be learned from the experience of trying to teach a class instead of taking a class. It is those opportunities to become autonomous and self-guided learners which would greatly benefit our students and contribute toward a world standard of education at ICU.

The Role of TAs During Experiments and Labs in Natural Science Courses

Hiroyuki Kose

Department of Life Science

In the last academic year, 23 Natural Science courses that involve experiments and labs (hereafter "lab courses") were offered with a help from TAs. The number of TAs were 1.6 per class, and each TA looked after 8.2 students. The latter figure is significantly smaller than that of non-lab Natural Science courses (20.8 students per TA). This article addresses the special environment of lab courses that calls for more TAs, and also the present situation and issues concerning TAs in lab courses.

The role of TAs in lab courses

- Safety management- Obviously the safety of stu-

dents is primary concern in lab courses. Poisonous substances, mechanical tools, and electric appliances maybe hazardous, and could cause injury or short/long term health issues. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of TAs in preventing these situations.

- Health management- This is especially important in lab courses involving outdoor activities. For example, students may have to gather samples of animal and plant species at the beach in a hot day during Marine Field Study (BIO 253). The physical condition of students must be closely monitored, and quick action is necessary in case of emergency.

- **Class management-** In lab courses, most students should follow the procedure in a similar pace, let alone in correct order. Few students falling behind could hinder the process of the whole class. Assuring stable progress is not only important for the sake of efficiency, but also crucial in sustaining the concentration of the students, hence securing safety.
- **Leading discussions-** Diverse angle of thinking is necessary to analyze the data of experiment results. Novice students will often have to face unforeseen results. Moreover, it is unlikely that students would manage to gather “beautiful data” that is showcased in the textbook. To understand the reason and meaning of their own results, it is important to have a session in small groups. In other words, one of the points of lab courses is to let students discover the fact that even a simple experiment needs circumspect preparation to procure the expected results, and that typical results shown in textbooks are often unrealistic. Therefore students will learn a lot from their discussions with TAs, who are more experienced scientists, about how they should tackle the experiments.
- **Equipment management-** The TAs prove to be a big help when it comes to the preparation, reservation, operation check, and cleaning up of various reagents, equipments, and appliances, because many of these chores must be taken care of before and after the class.

The issues concerning the TA system in lab courses

- **Extramural TAs-** Many TAs who work at ICU are graduate students outside of ICU. In the list above, the “equipment management” cannot be executed satisfactorily if the TA is not from ICU. Given that equipment management is the most time-consuming and tiresome task in running a lab course, TAs would not contribute enough for the class if they were from outside of ICU.
- **Emergency protocol-** Senior students who choose Natural Science as their majors are obliged to

participate the experiment safety training session that is hosted every April. In case of emergency, protocols shared in the session should be followed carefully. However, in some cases, extramural TAs do not receive this kind of training at all. Even if all the TAs were ICU students, I believe it is important to have an organization-wide review session.

- **Lack of TA education-** ICU states that the TA system not only facilitates the learning environment of undergraduate students, but also it helps the learning of TAs themselves. At this moment, however, TAs in lab courses merely work as lab assistants with sufficient knowledge. In institutes in the U.S. and other countries, TAs often take care of the whole experiment. They would have to explain the background information as well as the procedures of the experiment, and while assisting the preparation of the experiment, they would even grade the reports handed in by the students, under the instructor’s supervision. With more responsibility on their shoulders, they would actively and creatively participate in the process of education. Such experience will naturally help them acquire the skills necessary in their future careers as college faculties. Of course, such skills should come in handy even for those seeking careers outside the academia. A paradigm shift is needed, in which the faculties are responsible for educating and developing the skills of TAs, rather than solely instructing undergraduate students.

It is important that TAs actively participate in education at ICU, especially when ICU advocates liberal arts education, where students have diverse intellectual interests. More than mere assistants, TAs should rather be considered as colleagues to develop the education in undergraduate school. Such conduct should become the signature of ICU graduate school. Among the Natural Science courses, lab courses should be a good place to start the reform.

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Report on the FD Seminars

“Open Course Ware and Open Education”

Speaker: Shigeru Miyagawa

(60th Anniversary Professor, ICU/Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

Date/Time: Wednesday, 12 June 2013, 12:50-13:40

Location: University Hall, Room 170

Professor Miyagawa was a member of the team which launched OpenCourseWare (OCW) in Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) back in 2001. He is currently the Chair of MIT OpenCourseWare Advisory Board. In the seminar, he has shared with us the history and the current issues of OCW.

OCW allows a university to distribute its lectures through the Internet. With the streaming of lectures, together with downloadable textbooks and handouts, anyone with an Internet connection would be able to attend the lecture from anywhere around the globe for free. Many prominent universities in the U.S. has followed in MIT's footsteps, and today dozens of universities open their “real” lectures to the public. Viewers may enjoy interactive communication with the lecturer by registering online, which makes it possible for the lecturer to grade viewers' assignments. With the growing interest in OCW, some lectures have more than 100 thousand registered viewers.

At the starting point, MIT was hoping to establish a system that could diffuse knowledge by utilizing the Internet so that high school students, both domestic and international, could clarify their choices of universities. Also, from the viewpoint of the FD, MIT hoped that being able to listen to lectures by colleagues could be a positive stimulus for the faculty members to improve their own lectures. But today OCW has become a great tool to fuel the passion for learning

by giving out actual credits, and also to discover distinguished persons living in regions and countries without sufficient learning environment.

Torrents of similar online ventures have been established ever since. Coursera, edX, and Udacity are well-known examples of such Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. There are also more private ventures, such as Kahn Academy, an education NPO started out as a series of lectures uploaded to YouTube for the eyes of personal friends, which became so popular that they were used as part of school curriculum. The overall phenomenon, which started less than a decade ago, has become so brisk that it is affecting education systems worldwide.

In Japan, Keio University pioneered in the use of OCW, under the name of JOCW. ICU has started its own OCW from April 2013. We do not share all of our courses at ICU, but we hope this will help the public to understand the characteristics of education at ICU, and also about the faculty members who contribute to this. The seminar has made us recognize, yet again, the importance of using the Internet more efficiently, now that the Internet has become one of the basic factors of social infrastructure.

Kenya Kubo

(English translation provided by the FD office)

“Managing TAs for More Effective Classes”

Speaker: Richiko Ikeda (Department of Society, Culture and Media)
Jeremiah Alberg (Department of Philosophy and Religion)
Yukie Ban (TA), Yumi Kodaira (TA)

Date/Time: Wednesday, 11 September 2013, 12:50-13:40

Location: University Hall, Room 316

Two instructor-teaching assistant (TA) pairs were invited to talk at the FD seminar. They had been picked from courses where, in the Teaching Effectiveness Survey for the AY2013 spring semester, larger numbers of students said they believed the presence of TAs made the course more effective.

The pair of Professor Richiko Ikeda and her TA, Ms. Yukie Ban, were the first to address the audience. Professor Ikeda had Ms. Ban engage in practical duties, not the least because Ms. Ban has said she wishes to be an educator/researcher in the future.

When their class toured the ICU Hachiro Yuasa Memorial Museum, for example, Ms. Ban joined Professor Ikeda in paying a preparatory visit to the site, planning the tour and guiding the students during the visit. She also drafted a class plan and gave a trial class under Professor Ikeda’s supervision.

Ms. Ban said her duties always kept her thinking about what role was expected from her as TA, an intermediary between the instructor and the students. She said, for example, that she tried to present examples of predictable objections and counterarguments to opinions raised by students, rather than presenting answers, because a TA, short of being an instructor herself, had a limited scope of knowledge.

She also said giving the trial class, among other duties, represented a particularly significant experience. She added that receiving comment sheets from students provided a timely opportunity to reflect on the significance of her own research.

Professor Jeremiah Alberg and his TA, Ms. Yumi Kodaira, were the second pair to present their case. Their academic program gives students frequent assignments, including the submission of short reports.

Ms. Kodaira checked if the reports submitted to the Moodle system met the length and content requirements of each assignment. She also graded exercises and dealt with technical problems that arose

when students submitted their assignments online. She conveyed any questions from students to Professor Alberg.

While Ms. Kodaira said she needed time before she got accustomed to her online duties, she said she asked Professor Alberg for advice every time she encountered difficulties and unfamiliar situations. Professor Alberg said a TA should be assigned to do responsible duties if his/her experience working as a TA was to be more meaningful. Ms. Kodaira, on her part, that communications with the instructor are the more essential, the heavier the responsibility the duties involve.

While the TA in the first pair of speakers participated in classes more often to engage in her duties, the TA in the second pair had her duties centered on checking online assignment submittals. That presented an opportunity to realize anew the diversity of TA duties and work styles.

While the pairs had contrasting duty formats, they did have certain things in common.

First, the TAs were being assigned duties that involved a certain degree of responsibility. Both TAs were actively engaging in their respective duties with a sense of responsibility. And the instructors were communicating closely with their TAs.

Although the TAs were assigned heavily responsible duties and unfamiliar tasks, close communications with the instructor in charge allowed each of them to fulfill those duties. And a relationship of deep trust was apparently forming between the instructor and the TA during that process.

The seminar provided an opportunity to get a glimpse of ideal types of the TA system that benefits the instructor, the TA and the students alike.

Yuki Nishinoh

(English translation provided by the FD office)

Editor's Note

This was my first occasion to participate in the editing of FD Newsletter after being transferred to the Academic Affairs Division in April 2013. The FD Newsletter has been issued in today's format and intervals since the academic year 1996. If we delve into the Division's archive, we could closely feel the history of ICU's FD activities, just by following the theme of each issue. After some review, we have decided to publish this issue in a simpler format that resembles earlier issues. The FD Newsletter is also available on the official website of ICU. Please refer to them as well.

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