

Policy Issues of Remote Participation Classes Using Avatars

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1. Introduction

Online classes introduced under the coronavirus pandemic and avatar-utilizing classes are expected to be introduced in the future, despite their technical differences; they have similarities in that they limit the opportunities for students as natural persons to have direct, personal contact with other students and teachers. Therefore, understanding how lifestyle changes associated with remote participation in activities such as online classes affect students' learning attitudes and self-esteem is important for welcoming such a society of avatar coexistence. Considering the above situation, this study first introduces a case study that analyzes how changes in lifestyle associated with remote participation in activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected the learning attitudes and self-esteem of junior high and high school students at the University of Tokyo Affiliated Secondary School (hereinafter, the University of Tokyo Affiliated School), located in Tokyo. It then discusses the prospects and challenges of student support using avatars.

2. Subjects of the analysis

We used data from the University of Tokyo Affiliated School Student Panel Survey with permission from the Database Management and Operation Committee. The subjects of the analysis were first to sixth graders at the University of Tokyo Affiliated School who cooperated with the student panel survey in the 2020, 2021, and 2022 academic years.

3. Analysis results

At the University of Tokyo Affiliated Schools, some students' learning attitudes declined after a one-year time lag due to the sudden return to face-to-face classes; in fact, students did not adapt to the style of advancing learning through direct contact with teachers and friends, after getting used to the learning style of online classes over a long period during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, students with low self-esteem and fatigue tended to increase in the 2022 academic year after

returning to face-to-face classes, compared to the 2020 academic year, when they attended online classes.

4. Discussion

The above analysis results suggest that during the personality formation period of junior high and high school students, they lived online, and even after returning to face-to-face, they continued to wear masks, often referred to as "face pants," which made it impossible to see each other's expressions and placed them in unstable interpersonal relationships where they could not read each other's true faces or true intentions. Consequently, many students might have become unfamiliar with and found it difficult to communicate face-to-face with people other than their family members because they avoided each other and lost opportunities to interact. This could cause similar problems in the future if remote participation classes using avatars becomes widespread in school education. In the case of remote class participation, teachers may be able to understand students' thoughts, but they may not fully grasp their detailed actions. This could make it difficult to notice subtle changes in students compared with face-to-face situations, as well as to praise appropriate actions, provide necessary student support, or conduct counseling. Nevertheless, being given the option to use avatars in school counseling and student support situations could be desirable for the students themselves.

5. Related literature

[1] Hotta, S. (2023). Constitutional Issues in Artificial Intelligence and Avatar Symbiotic Sports Society. JSAI Technical Report, SIG-FPAI 126, 1-7.
https://doi.org/10.11517/jsaifpai.126.0_01

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