Paper Title: A case study in organisational crisis: Universities, international exchange and 3/11

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Abstract
The 11 March 2011 natural disaster and ensuing nuclear crisis (‘3/11’) sparked a miscellany of secondary and tertiary crises within Japanese organisations, even those which suffered no direct physical damage. This paper examines the post-3/11 experience of Japan’s universities as one case study on the short and long-term effects of the disaster on large organisations. The aim of this examination is to develop a better understanding of the roles of different organisational actors and stakeholders, and to identify and account for gaps between policy and practice in disaster response and planning.

In universities, one of the most visible impacts of 3/11 was on international education programs. Foreign nationals enrolled in Japanese institutions departed the country in large numbers, and many others scheduled to enrol also stayed away. Among these were numerous participants in exchange programs with universities in other countries, including Australia. In responding to this student exodus and determining the future of their exchange programs and the remaining participants in them, Japanese university administrators struggled to maintain an effective balance between the wider priorities of their own institutions, their obligations to partner universities overseas, and the needs and demands of the students themselves. Analysis of the handling of this ‘trilemma’ reveals a complex arrangement of operational and strategic considerations, none of which are immediately visible in the day-to-day functioning of the
organisation, but all of which are called to account in a crisis. This paper uses analysis of the lessons learned and unlearned from the 3/11 experience in universities to make better sense of organisational crises in a Japanese context more generally.