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University Teacher Training in Japan

La Formación en Docencia Universitaria en Japón

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Abstract

University teacher training in Japan has been promoted as a part of 'Faculty Development (FD)'. Teacher training became a 'substantial duty' to faculties for of undergraduate schools by a ministerial ordinance in 2008 (graduate schools in 2007). However, contents of the Faculty Development are left to each organisation's discretion, and the ordinance does not have the legal right to mandate the participation of all academic staff in teacher training. In the 2000s, Japanese universities were under the external pressures such as quality assurance inspections, acquisition of external funds, and the exposure of data about their students. These circumstances have promoted the movements of the Faculty Development as *KAIZEN* (collective improvement by means of the plan-do-check-action cycle) activities of education at institutions. However, a few institutions offer a systematised programme of teaching and learning for academic staff. The teacher training for enhancement of teaching skills is still not a priority in Japan.

Key words: University Teacher Training; Higher Education; Faculty Development.

Resumen

La formación del profesorado universitario en Japón ha sido promovida en el marco del "Desarrollo profesional docente (FD)". La formación del profesorado se convirtió en un "deber sustancial» para los profesores de los centros de pregrado por una orden ministerial en 2008 (en 2007 para los centros de posgrado). Sin embargo, el contenido de la Capacitación Docente queda a la discreción de cada organización, y el marco legal no impone como obligatoria la participación de todo el personal académico en la formación del profesorado. En la década de 2000, las universidades japonesas empezaron a moverse de acuerdo con presiones externas, como las inspecciones para garantizar la calidad, la obtención de fondos externos, y la publicación de datos acerca de sus estudiantes. Estas circunstancias han promovido los movimientos de la Capacitación Docente aplicada a las actividades de educación en las instituciones, y entendidas según el concepto del KAIZEN (proceso de mejora colectiva que sigue el ciclo planificación-acción-verificación). Sin embargo, la formación del profesorado basada en las habilidades de enseñanza todavía no es una prioridad en Japón.

Palabras clave: Formación del Profesorado de la Universidad; Educación Superior; Capacitación Docente.

Background

University teacher training in Japan has been promoted as a part of 'Faculty Development'. In the 1980s, higher education researchers introduced the concepts of Staff Development in the United Kingdom (UK) and Faculty Development in the United States (US). In the late 1990s, the two concepts were merged to form Faculty Development (FD). In Japanese, this term translates into 'enhancement of qualities and abilities of a professorate' (group of professors). However, the term 'professorate' was obscure because it did not identify who was responsible for FD at the practical level, and was in fact left to the subjective decision of each academic staff member. For over a century, Japanese universities have had no concept of training or development of academic staff in general.

FD-related arguments surfaced among researchers, academic staff in charge of FD, policy makers and academics concerned about issues of general education in lower grades. Despite the broad functionality of FD, its activities have gradually focused on the improvement of teaching methods, both in individual lessons and in overall classroom pedagogy. However, broadly speaking, FD activities still concern the individual efforts by academic staff. Most institutions have no policy in place for the systematic engagement of FD or the professional development of academic staff enabling them to be comfortable with teaching and/or learning outcomes of training programmes. The main reasons are summarised as follows:

First, most academics take research achievements more seriously than educational achievements. An international comparison reveals this marked tendency among Japanese academic staff as strong in advanced nations (Arimoto and Ehara 1996). Second, the business community did not care about outcomes of learning and teaching in higher education. In general, because of intense competition in university entrance examinations, companies attach greater importance to the university from which an applicant or employee graduated comes from than to what was studied there. From a social perspective, economic conditions were favourable in the 1970s and 1980s; both the lifelong employment system peculiar to Japan and corporate education in Japanese companies were well developed, so much so that both companies and graduates cared little about learning outcomes of higher education. Third, in the 1990s, university reforms progressed quickly. The university education council was established in 1987; it submitted a report titled 'Improvement of Higher Education', which broadly outlined reforms. According to the council, the most critical issue was the disorganisation of general undergraduate programmes. The council's report became symbolic of change in the old higher education system and for the traditional academic community (Amano 2004). Certain evaluation systems were introduced in the 1990s to the higher education community, and teachers became busy dealing with these systems, and the perception of losing a time previously devoted to teaching students was widespread. Meanwhile, because of the increasing number of doctoral students, recruitment competition and promotion among academic staff intensified, and evaluation still inclined towards research achievements. Later in 2004, all national universities were restructured into a national university corporation as a juridical organisation.

Three features of the current Japanese higher education reform are 'massification', 'marketisation' (market fundamentalism) and 'globalisation' (Amano 2006: 46-7). According to the School Basic Survey (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 2012), Japan currently has 783 universities, including 86 former national universities, 92 prefectural and municipal universities and 605 private universities. The number of universities has increased by approximately 1.5 times in the last twenty years. The advancement rates of high school graduates to universities and junior colleges were 27.0% in 1975, and 32.0% in 1995. The advancement rate in 2013 is 53.5%. This figure indicates the 'universal student access' described by Martin Trow(1973). Eight out of 10 high school graduates are accepted into private institutions—a relatively unique situation compared to that in European countries.

Moreover, in such a situation, some faculties and groups have addressed FD training from their own perspective. One of such perspective is an independent activity in Daigaku (University in Japanese) Seminar House, a public utility foundation jointly managed in higher education institutions. It organised seminars for academic staff from 1990 to 2002. Another example is faculties of medicine. The Ministry Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Education began to organise a workshop for teachers of medical school in 1974. Since then, those workshops have been run at individual institutions. Japan Society for Medical Education was established in 1969. They regarded their six-year medical education programmes as a basis for lifelong education, with the intention to train medical students to quickly respond to the rapid progress of medicine. Some textbooks of medical education were published. These books provided original learning materials for developing seminars and workshops.

In the late 1990s, educational development centres were established mainly at the former national universities. Most centres have been responsible for managing general education issues and organising seminars and/or workshops for teaching staff at their own institutions. In the beginning, most centres focused on 'university reform' and/or modification of curriculum. These seminars were presented as lectures. After 2000, the centres became hubs for teacher training at each institution, especially for new staff training; they are sometimes open to staff of other institutions that do not have such centres. In 2010, MEXT recognised seven centres as regional hubs for supporting other institutions to promote staff development, including teacher training.

Law and Rules

The Fundamental Law of Education (2006) determines that 'The teacher has to strive for research and discipline continuously and has to strive for execution of the job. The status is respected in view of the importance of the mission and duty, and while proper treatment is expected, cultivation and substantial training must be achieved' (Article 9, section 2).

In 2007, a ministerial ordinance of the MEXT, the University Establishment Standards for Graduate Schools, that specifies the minimum standard required to establish a university based on the School Education Law, was revised as follows: 'Graduate schools shall regularly conduct training and research to improve the

contents and methods of lessons and the supervision of the graduate school concerned' (Article 14, section 3). In 2008, the University Establishment Standards for Undergraduate Schools was also revised: Training which had been an 'efforts duty' in 1999 became a 'substantial duty' (Article 25, section 3).

However, each organisation decides the kind of FD that is to be performed, and the ordinance does not have the legal right to mandate the participation of all academic staff in teacher training. Therefore, in many organisations, the decision of participation in training is held with individual faculty members.

Recently, a motion has been put forth to raise the voluntary participation of academic staff by relating training with personnel matters. For example, in academic year 2013, the former national Ehime University will require academic staff to complete 100 hours of training to be eligible for the tenure track. This training will comprise three domains of academic development: 1) learning and teaching, 2) research and 3) management.

Current Conditions of Training and Participants

A MEXT (2009) survey shows that over 90% of higher education institutions work on FD as part of KAIZEN (improvement) activities. However, the concept of teacher training is not yet defined in most higher education institutions, with ongoing arguments on the necessity of such training for academic staff. Moreover, improvement opportunities, such as programmes for new staff, preparation of future faculty programmes and development of teaching portfolios, are offered at many institutions.

Training Programmes for New Staff

Most teacher training targets beginners and newcomer teachers at the institution. According to the results of an investigation on information available on each organisation's website, over 70% of former national universities conducted training sessions for newly appointed personnel in 2012 on topics such as position orientation, lectures on higher education trends and workshops on the knowledge and skill of teaching. Some institutions offer a systematised programme of teaching and learning for teaching staff. These programmes include subjects such as instructional design and teaching methods to promote students' active participation. However, most of these programmes are brief, lasting for a couple of days.

Niigata University offers a programme that is conducted twice a year that comprises one day of orientation and two days of workshops. With 20 participants per group, the workshops promote a university teaching and learning method termed as 'deep learning'. Through discussions and debates, participants make suggestions reflecting their work as teaching practitioners. They also perform micro-teaching and mutual evaluations. In rare cases, some programmes span over a year. The 2008 Central Council for Education report introduced 'Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education' in the UK, strongly promoting a more systematised programme. It became mandatory for newly appointed academic staff at most institutions to complete the

programme. Ritsumeikan University, a very large private institution, conducts one of the most intensive programmes, spanning over two years and split into three parts: 1) provision of e-learning through the use of almost forty available videos, 2) workshops and 3) submission of teaching portfolios. Despite it not being mandatory, most new staff attends this programme. Ritsumeikan University offers the participants a university certificate indicating records of attendance and completion. Most participants, especially those new to teaching, are happy to attend. The participants reported, 'It was a good opportunity to reflect on my teaching' and 'It was nice to see and talk with other teachers'.

Participants in most programmes showed a high level of satisfaction. According to a post-programme evaluation questionnaire at Niigata University, a participant reported the following: 'It was good to argue with the staff of a different field'; 'senior staff should also participate'; and 'in order to have a constructive discussion for improvement, these pieces of knowledge and information are indispensable'. Because there are few opportunities to become acquainted with faculty members across fields, this workshop has a secondary meaning, that is, some participants may become acquainted with colleagues during the programmes. Furthermore, participants may choose to complete other training opportunities. Indeed, such opinions are expressed in many university training programmes.

Preparing Future Faculty Programme (PFFP)

Recently, leading Japanese universities, referred to as the 'seven ex-imperial universities' or 'ex-higher normal schools', have been developing the 'Preparing Future Faculty Programme (PFFP)'. The programmes targeting graduate students in master's and doctoral courses are offered by higher-education development centres at each institution. For example, since 2006 Nagoya University has offered a programme for doctoral students spanning over sixty hours including thirty contact hours, and is part of an alternative general education for graduate school education. This programme is open to all graduate students and participants earn two academic credits. Moreover, this programme is aiming to support students' overall career development.

In Japan, the PFFP would be a unique FD approach, because of the relatively low number of graduate students in teaching assistant positions. 'Future Faculty' implies very common faculty and not a specific one. In Japan, the number of teaching assistants is limited, with the work they do as being restricted, in contrast to those in Europe and the US. For example, teaching assistants are generally not permitted to lecture and mark independently. Recently, universities such as Hiroshima University are beginning to offer PFFP for teaching assistants, including teaching performance in classes. Therefore, PFFP has two roles, to support FD and to support the career preparation of graduate students.

Teaching Portfolio

The teaching portfolio was introduced to Japanese higher education after the mid-2000s. Recently, some institutions have begun using a teaching portfolio as reflective training for academic staff and/or as a record of teaching performance. Some

organisations plan to make writing a teaching portfolio and performing reflective practice mandatory activities for academic staff.

Outreach, Formal Training and Recognition of Teachers

Organisations that offer a certain amount of programme activities publish a certificate of attendance and/or completion to the participants. Niigata University's certificate indicates the workshop's module titles. Ehime University plans to publish such certificates 2013 onwards. However, these certificates are limited to proof within an institution and cannot be converted into an academic credit.

The contribution of the Japan Association for Educational Development in Higher Education (JAED).

The Japan Association for Educational Development in Higher Education (JAED), a member organisation of the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED), is the only network for the development of higher education in Japan. JAED members are academic staff in charge of not only educational development at each institution, but also teaching, research and/or administration. In 2010, JAED developed 'The Professional Development Framework for Teaching and Learning in Japan'. This framework supports higher education institutions and educational developers while individually developing training programmes. The framework consists of five areas of core knowledge and skills:

(1) Understanding of academic communities

- Traditions and cultures of higher education and each institution
- Communication skills with colleagues

(2) Instructional design

- Setting learning outcomes
- Planning courses
- Setting assessment criteria

(3) Provision of teaching and learning

- Knowledge of how people learn and methods of teaching
- Skills for teaching and learning
- Skills for communicating with students

(4) Assessment and feedback

- Knowledge of methods of assessment and feedback

(5) Self-improvement

- Reflection of teaching
- Career development
- Educational development

This framework began development as part of a research project based on the National Research Institute of Educational Policy. We created it on the basis of the experience and precedent examples at more than 20 institutions. We took the UK as a reference for the concept of 'framework'. Then, nearly all project members gathered to establish the association. The consortium of Universities in Kyoto and the Kyoto centre for FD use the framework to develop their programmes for new staff. They offer and share the programme with partnered institutions (http://www.consortium.or.jp/). The framework will be revised in 2013, and the organisation plans to apply for accreditation of the training program based on the revised version.

Centre (Units) of Educational Development

In 2012, 67% of former national universities had centres for educational development. The Research Institute for Higher Education of Hiroshima University was the first centre in Japan. Established in 1970 as a research office for educational issues under dispute at the university, in 1972, it became a centre under the national school act-of-incorporation enforcement regulations. In 1986, Tsukuba University established another research centre for higher education. Other centres have been established since the late 1990s. Currently, almost all organisations have both research and educational development functions.

Most staff members at these centres are academic staff and researchers, with generally only one or two members as full-time staff for educational development and other staff members holding additional posts at other faculties. The centre's role is primarily that of mediating adjustments among faculties and departments of general education, including foreign language education for undergraduate programmes. The centre exclusively offers academic staff training as a part of its role, and in fact, most institutions have not yet implemented policies on academic staff training. In that sense, centres in Japan differ from those in European countries such as the UK.

Achievements

The benefits of research on higher education and comparative studies have politically and practically brought 'learner-centred' education into higher education in Japan with keywords such as *knowledge societies* and *lifelong learning*. Currently, learner-centred education is common, and developing methods of active learning to make students positive learners has been of key focus in academic conferences such as the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan.

Discussing the Faculty Development in Japan

The Central Council for Education reported current issues concerning teacher training as follows (MEXT 2008:38): 'It (teacher training) is passive and uses the one-way lecture. The contents are not necessarily practical and are chosen according to each teacher's needs. Training has not been developed to promote and support efforts for teachers' everyday educational improvement'.

Moreover, the report raised the following issues as to what the state should support:

(1) A framework of professional standards and/or competencies required of university teachers as advanced professionals should be developed.

(2) Higher education institutions should take initiative and the country should offer the support required to facilitate active measures.

(3) The state should support the efficient training of university teachers, FD programmes, teaching materials and so on, using the theory of FD, the related learning field's knowledge or its base of practice. In that case, the state should adopt a perspective on completion of the training used for the employment and promotion of university teachers, and refer some examples like a higher education course in the UK (Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education).

The teacher training issue is related to 'qualification of academic staff' or 'teaching qualification in higher education'. An international comparative research survey, contracted research to promote university reform, reported on the qualification systems of academic staff in foreign countries (Tohoku University 2011). The 2012 report mentioned the importance of a specialist such as a 'faculty developer' for university teacher training.

Japan has two academic societies where we discuss teacher training or FD in Japanese higher education. They are the Liberal and General Education Society of Japan and the Japan Association of Higher Education Research.

Teacher training in foreign countries has been introduced both by case study and international comparative study approaches at conferences of some academic societies. Views have been exchanged on the necessity and importance of teacher training. However, whether training organised by 'Faculty Developers' or other trainers is actually valid for academic staff (Tanaka 2009, Hata 2005) is still being debated. If such training is necessary, the training of Faculty Developers is another issue. Kinukawa (2010) suggested why the Daigaku Seminar House discontinued their teacher training programmes in 2002, and mentioned the need for experts in educational development in higher education as follows: 'volunteer teacher staff members who are amateurs in educational development in higher education were not able to fully reply to participants' specific questions'.

As of the 2008 Central Council for Education report, the common views on the issues of university teacher training were as follows: Some student surveys show an inadequate students' satisfaction rating of teaching. In addition, there are many requests for improvement of teaching (MEXT 2008). There is still no data showing the

progress of solutions for this issue. However, the following can be enumerated as features of Japan:

- ✓ Teacher training in higher education has developed as part of *KAIZEN* activities in faculties and institutions.
- ✓ Enhancement of teaching skills is left to the self-reliant efforts of each teacher.
- ✓ Finally, the university culture does not favour individual teaching evaluations.

In teacher training programmes for academic staff, the Japanese offer, for instance, an overnight training camp-style course enabling participants to communicate with each other and build a sense of fellowship. Senior and executive staff, including the university president, may attend such a programme. In addition, there is a tendency to favour a full-participation system over a free-participation system. Generally, the Japanese hold greater regard towards collective than individual action, and therefore teacher training would have to take a unique approach.

Based on these features of university teacher training in Japan, we suggest the following in terms of systems and content.

1) In terms of systematic training, clarifying a person or faculty in charge of teacher training is a necessity.
2) The role and mission of a unit that offers a training program and promotes teaching enhancement must carefully be defined. It is important to have full-time, professionally trained staff.
3) To realise the two points suggested above, training itself needs to be legally mandated, at least for the time being. In this case, teacher training should be correlated with personnel matters.
4) In terms of content, teaching competencies or capabilities must be defined. In that case, the broad developmental stage of experienced teachers from graduate students must be carefully considered. Just recently, on June 14th in 2013, *the second basic strategy for advancement of Education of the next five years* has reported in the Diet. It is a cabinet decision and includes a policy to investigate the participation of academic staff in systematic teacher training and the adequate competences to teach at universities. It would be a new beginning.

University teacher training in Japan still needs further development. However, the situation has relatively advanced if we compare today's status with that of a decade ago, and the circumstances surrounding academics has also changed. We must take necessary measures to maintain and further enhance this advancement.

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