

Training Courses for University Administrators in Japan

Masahiro Tanaka[†]

<ABSTRACT>

This paper discusses new training courses for university administrators in Japan. Traditionally, specialization among university staff was not expected, which has delayed the development of these courses. However, this tradition suddenly disappeared due to the current severe competition among universities. Specialization of university administrators became crucial for survival from this competition. Japanese society demands better training courses for university administrators. This paper is composed of four sections: 1) definition of the term 'university administrator' in Japan; 2) tradition of training university staff as administrators; 3) three courses on university administration; and 4) conclusion.

Key words: university administrator, higher education, Japan

Introduction

Twenty five years ago, Japanese researchers in the field of higher education were viewed as a minority of 'different people' amongst scholars. At that time, research mainly focused on primary and secondary education. However, in 1990s, there were many proposals for revolutionizing the higher education system, which led to the need for specialized research in this area. In this context, research into higher education became to be actively pursued, and training systems were expanded by, for instance, former imperial universities, including the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University; former colleges for teacher training, including Hiroshima University and Tsukuba University; and renowned private universities, such as Waseda University.

Research into higher education clearly plays a vital role in the field of education in modern-day Japan. Job postings for researchers in the field of higher education have also steadily increased since the late 1990s. Therefore, it is now popular for universities to

[†] Correspondence Author(Centre for 21st Century Education, Hirosaki University, masatana@cc.hirosaki-u.ac.jp)

provide training to such researchers. Nevertheless, the number of universities that provide programmes specializing in university administration is surprisingly low. Several universities have only very recently begun to offer such programmes, including the University of Tokyo, Nagoya University, and J. F. Oberlin University.

This paper explores why Japan is lagging behind other developed countries in providing training to potential university administrators. From this perspective, first, the paper describes a generally accepted definition of the term ‘university administrator’ in Japan. Secondly, it explains how training for university staff as administrators was traditionally implemented. Thirdly, the paper highlights the current situation and issues by examining three universities that provide courses in university administration. Finally, reasons for the lack of development of such courses are provided in conclusion. This paper is about management.

Definition of the term ‘university administrator’ in Japan

In Japan, the term ‘university administrator’ implies two meaning. As described by Yukio Fujita (2008, p.32):

In its first interpretation, the term applies to specialists in the field of university management and administration or to university officials undertaking the responsibility for administrative decision-making and the implementation of policies, where this also includes top-level management such as board chairman or university president. ... Second, this term can be taken to mean persons operating as staff members in order to support top management decision and persons operating in management capacity, formulating policies in line with top management decision and generating tangible results based thereupon.

As described in more detail in Section 3 below, the makeup of training courses for university administrators as offered by Japanese universities reflects the second definition. In this respect, these courses clearly differ in their aims from similar courses offered by universities in the United States. They generally seek to bestow vice presidents or

department heads with the qualifications and experience necessary to become eligible for the post of university president (Honma, 2008).

The lack of development of American-style training courses for university administrators in Japan stems partly from the fact that faculty councils are powerful in this country. This means that the university president, vice president, and other officials have limited authority. Consequently, administrators are much less inclined to specialize in their work than their counterparts in the United States. Another contributing factor to the lack of specialization is the traditional tendency in Japan to fill management positions from the ranks of prominent researchers. Once an administrator's term in office has ended, he or she is strongly motivated to return to research area (Kaneko, 2008, p.9).

In terms of specialization among university staff, Japan is also lagging behind the United States. This fact is highlighted by examining the hiring practices for such staff in Japan. According to Akira Tachi (2008, p.65):

It is standard in Japan that no specific duties are defined when recruiting university staff. In addition, these staff members have no fixed duties once hired. This is not, however, the case in the United States, where not only faculty members but also administrative staff have roles and responsibilities clearly defined during the recruitment process: roles and responsibilities that must be adhered to once they are employed.

This presents us with a conundrum: Given that it is standard practice in Japan for university staff to be hired as generalists, why do universities offer any training programmes that allow them to specialize? In order to answer this question, we must first examine methods through which staff members are trained within universities themselves. This issue is addressed in the following section.

The tradition of training university staff as administrators

For university staff in Japan, the conventional road to promotion has usually been to

develop an array of different skills independently through diverse practical experiences gained by moving through different jobs in various internal departments. Premised on lifelong employment and the seniority system, this rotation model pervades in Japanese society (Terasaki, 2010, p.10). Against this backdrop, staff members have little expectation of being recruited by other universities as specialists in any particular field. Instead, they aim to be promoted to management positions as generalists, capable of adapting to a wide range of different roles flexibly (Kaneko, 2008, p.8).

However, many staff members at national universities, prior to the conversion of these universities into independent administrative corporations in April 2004, were faced with a 'glass ceiling,' blocking them from advancing upward. At that time, a pair of parallel administrative systems coexisted within national universities: some staff members were hired by the universities themselves, while the remainder were engaged with the Ministry of Education. In this setup, the university president had the whole authority only over the university-hired staff up to the level of deputy section chief, whilst everyone above that rank reported to the Ministry of Education. Hence:

No staff member hired by the university, irrespective of his or her work ability, could be promoted to section chief without first passing a Ministry of Education reassignment examination or passing a section-chief promotion examination while operating in the role of deputy section chief (Hata, 2010, p.26).

This dual system had the effect of smothering almost all incentives for staff at national universities to specialize in the hope of promotion.

After the incorporation of national universities, this restrictive personnel system was eliminated by law, although the old custom still persisted at some universities. Moreover, with universities now burdened with the task of running their own operations, there was a sudden jump in the 'awareness of the critical need for competent administrators, who are capable of providing support to the university president and other key members of the management team' (Yamamoto, 2008, p.11). As Japan entered a new era in which the number of openings regularly exceeded the number of applicants, the need for skilled and capable staff was also

highlighted at private universities because they faced a fierce battle for survival: nearly the half of private universities in Japan have been suffering for under-enrolment.

There have been many cases where managers with proven track record in the real corporate world were invited to work for universities as management specialists. However, Motohisa Kaneko (2008, p.9) points out that “nearly all attempts to apply corporate management experience within the university environment resulted in failure.” Jun Oba (2009, p.15) argues in response to these failures that:

Universities have come to the conclusion that rather than depending on outside personnel, ample consideration should be given to the career development of current staff, and human resource development should focus on training from within, where this would also take the specialities of staff into account.

Enhancement of the skills of administrative staff within a university is now gaining popularity in Japan as one facet of staff development. Meanwhile, in recent years activities by the Japan Association of University Administrative Management have intensified, an organization established in 1997 with the aim of providing an off-campus forum for exchanging ideas and providing information for university staff keen on developing their own skills. Given these trends, it has become increasingly apparent that graduate-school courses allowing university staff to develop their own specialist skills are critical in terms of systematic training.

Nagoya University became the first Japanese university to offer a university administrator training course in April 2000. Following this, J. F. Oberlin University, the University of Tokyo, and Meijo University introduced similar courses in April 2004, 2005, and 2006, respectively. The following section will analyze the courses for training university administrators offered by Nagoya University, J. F. Oberlin University, and the University of Tokyo in order to determine the current state of affairs and issues that must be addressed.

Three courses on university administration

Nagoya University

Nagoya University is one of the seven former imperial universities: This signifies that it is a research-oriented institution. In April 2000, its Graduate School of Education and Human Development started to offer the Advanced Specialized Professional Training Programme as Master of Arts in Education degree programme. One of the courses in this programme is a Lifelong Learning course, whose aim is to develop highly specialized management and administrative skills for persons acting in a leadership capacity (or aiming to do so) at elementary and secondary schools, higher education institutions, lifelong-learning facilities, and related companies.

The Graduate School of Education and Human Development, which runs the Advanced Specialized Professional Training Programme, is a conventional graduate school and thus operates a system whereby instructors provide tuition for students both in this programme and a researcher training programme, rather than to one specific group. Students in both programmes also gather together for lectures in certain subjects. Most lectures are held on weekdays, but scheduled for evening hours (18:15-19:45 or 20:00-21:30) in order to facilitate the attendance of students who are currently employed.

In April 2006, the graduate school created the Educational Leadership and Management doctoral degree programme—the first such programme in Japan leading to a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree.

The following are the programme profiles of each degree programme at Nagoya University.

Master of Arts in Education (M.A. in Education)

Mission and goals. In the higher education management programme, professionals in the field of higher education and persons working in a broad spectrum of other associated disciplines are provided with specialist theoretical and practical training of a highly advanced nature. Its purpose is that they acquire highly specialized skills required to operate as effective leaders in an era where higher education has become an ever more global,

ubiquitous commodity. Furthermore, field study courses allow students to visit higher education institutions both in Japan and overseas as the part of their research.

Student backgrounds. The higher education management programme has capacity for one to four students, making it much smaller than the equivalent at J. F. Oberlin University or the University of Tokyo. All students are mature students, mostly working as university staff.

Graduates. The majority of students continue in their current roles after graduation.

Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)

Mission and goals. The Doctor of Education course has been designed to provide mature students with skills and knowledge they need to become highly specialized professionals capable of advanced applied research. The course is firmly rooted in the fundamental theories of education, yet also takes a practical, pragmatic approach to training.

Student backgrounds. Only students who are working are accepted.

Graduates. None has yet graduated.

J. F. Oberlin University

J. F. Oberlin University is a Christian private university in Japan. Around the year of 2000, this university succeeded in attracting several renowned (but elderly) academics in the study of higher education, mostly from Nagoya University. J. F. Oberlin University initially founded the Higher Education Administration Department as an area of specialization within the International Studies Department in April 2001. This was followed by the addition of correspondence courses in April 2004, with the Higher Education Administration Department becoming an independent department in April 2008.

On-campus courses are held on weekday evenings and on Saturdays on campus, which is in the city centre of Tokyo. They also have numerous intensive-study courses and offer correspondence courses that provide a flexible studying environment suitable for working adults. Correspondence courses are mainly offered for classes in which all feedback on assignments is sent to students; therefore, there is no need for students to commute to campus on a regular basis. Students receive research guidance from their professors at their

end-of-the-term screening sessions. Students from all over the country are able to take the correspondence courses.

The Higher Education Administration Department has been chosen by the European Union to partner with the International Master's Degree Programme in Higher Education Research of the University of Oslo (Norway). It has established English language courses that accept overseas students, mainly from Europe. Additionally, it provides international programmes in which professors from European universities teach courses.

The following is a programme profile of the master's degree programme at J. F. Oberlin University.

Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration (M.A. in HEA)

Mission and goals. This degree programme aims to educate university administrators (specialists in university management) who possess a wide range of specialized knowledge and ability in university administration, maintenance, and operation.

Student backgrounds. In addition to staff members, teachers, and operators from higher education institutions, national and regional governmental institutions, and educational research institutions, there are students who enter this programme directly after completing bachelor's degree. They create a student body with diverse backgrounds but share a common awareness of issues. As of May 2009, there were 13 students taking on-campus courses, and 75 students taking correspondence courses.

Table 1. Places of residence for students taking correspondence courses in the HEA programme for M.A. at J.F. OberlinUniversity (2009)

Prefecture	#	Prefecture	#	Prefecture	#	Prefecture	#
Hokkaido	4	Gunma	1	Ishikawa	1	Nara	1
Aomori	1	Saitama	1	Nagano	2	Hiroshima	1
Iwate	1	Chiba	7	Gifu	1	Yamaguchi	1
Miyagi	6	Tokyo	17	Aichi	4	Tokushima	1
Akita	2	Kanagawa	12	Mie	4	Fukuoka	4
Yamagata	1	Niigata	2	Osaka	9	Nagasaki	1
Ibaraki	2	Toyama	1	Hyogo	5	Kagoshima	4

Graduates. Most already-employed students continue their present jobs, but there are also students whose degrees have led to promotions or who were requested by, and transferred to, other universities. Some students move on to doctoral courses offered by other universities. Similarly, full-time students have taken university-related jobs, or moved on to doctoral courses.

The University of Tokyo

The University of Tokyo used to be the first imperial university and is now the top research university in Japan. The master's and doctorate programmes of the Research Department of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Tokyo have two specialist areas of study—Integrated Educational Sciences and Excellence of School Education—that comprise seven courses and three courses, respectively.

The University Management and Policy Course, introduced in April 2005, is the newest to be implemented in the integrated educational sciences area. This course is a graduate-school programme targeting supervisors and policy makers at universities and higher education institutes. It aims to train them in operating and managing universities by applying theoretical and practical education together to training future leaders and researchers in this new field. In the course, the students can pursue a master's degree by attending classes only in the evenings and on Saturdays. These timings were chosen mainly because staff members at universities and higher education institutes are expected to enroll in this course and over the half of students are full-time employees from different fields and age groups.

The followings are the programme profiles of each degree programme at the University of Tokyo.

Master of Arts in Education

Mission and goals. Along with basic theoretical studies, students participate in actual case studies at universities. The course provides basic training, by means of writing a master's dissertation, to those aiming to become researchers in the new academic field or becoming

managerial and administrative staff with a wide vision and practical decision-making abilities.

Student backgrounds. There were 32 students (including 24 full-time employees and 4 foreign nationals) in the master's course as of March 2009. The proportion of full-time employees (75%) and the distribution of age (Figure 1) in this course are markedly higher than in other courses.

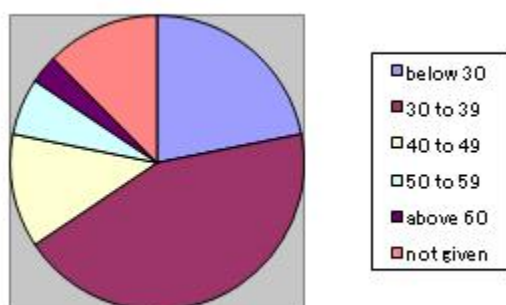


Figure 1. Age distribution in the Master of Arts in Education programme at the University of Tokyo master's course (March 2009)

The 24 full-time employees listed above included 1 university official, 1 university lecturer, 12 private university staff members, 8 public university staff members, and 2 others. Moreover, the previous academic achievements of the group are diverse. Twenty students have bachelor's degrees (three in education, three in literature and psychology, four in law and politics, three in economics, and seven others) and four have master's degrees (in education, literature, academic research, and political science).

Graduates. After their graduation ceremony, the majority of mature students continue their current jobs (although some are promoted). Other students often advance to the following doctoral programme, or in a number of cases are employed as university office personnel.

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Mission and goals. This course aims to guide potential researchers in this new field of study to become leaders in educational training. This includes training those who have

completed the master's course and are experienced as managerial or administrative staff to become managers and officials with effective leadership skills on an international scale.

Student backgrounds. There were nine students (including six full-time employees and one foreign national) in the programme as of March 2009.

Graduates. As of May 2010, no students had graduated from the programme.

What the programmes at these three universities have in common is arranging evening classes on working days and holidays so that adult students can study more easily. This could be regarded as an anomaly in Japan, where most postgraduate courses assume full-time enrollment and have lectures during the day. In fact, most students are adult students. This does not mean, however, that there are no problems surrounding adult student education. There are two main issues.

The first concerns how few adult students in Japan (unlike in the United States) benefit directly in terms of better jobs or moving to other universities—even if they study hard and complete courses in university administration. At the moment, therefore, there is no clear motivation—other than a sense of accomplishment—to spend time and money in this way. Course development is hardly likely to occur if there are no clear benefits.

The second is that most teaching staff are academics and not very practically minded. Thus, the content of most lectures is academic, and many of the issues addressed in lectures are macro issues such as further education policy. Providing the sort of knowledge (and particularly skills) that adult students would find useful in their work is difficult. Developing a range of subjects (such as the sort of advanced negotiating skills that would be useful within an academic institution—something that has not been taught in the past at postgraduate schools) is desirable. Universities are having little success, however, in their search for lecturers qualified to do this.

Conclusion

This paper has considered why university administration courses in Japan have recently become more pervasive and why little progress has been made until now. Competition for

survival between universities has been fierce in Japan—a country in which the number of 18-year olds is declining but universities are springing up everywhere. Teaching staff with university management capabilities have been absolutely essential. It is probably natural that courses specializing in their retraining have emerged.

Here, however, it is important to raise a further question. Why are university administration courses incorporated into existing postgraduate programmes rather than being offered by specialist postgraduate—professional—schools?

If these programmes were offered at professional schools at the postgraduate level, based on institutional standards, at least one third of the teaching staff would have a practical background. Looking at it the other way around, it would be easier to employ more practically inclined teaching staff with a modest academic record than it would be for existing postgraduate schools. Furthermore, this would enable the development of curricula that include practical work in place of the compulsory submission of a master's thesis. Given that they would meet the needs of adult students and result in real benefits, professional schools might be a better solution.

There are two advantages that university administration courses in existing postgraduate programmes have. One is the commitment of resources to training researchers. Given that the majority of adult students will return to their original workplace, however, there would appear to be a mismatch between supply and demand in terms of educational objectives. Another factor is that for researchers in higher education—whose numbers have been increasing dramatically in the last few years—the establishment of courses is linked to the creation of new posts. Without doubt, these researchers would prefer working in an existing postgraduate school, where research can be conducted fairly easily, than in a professional school, where the focus is on education. However, this way of thinking does not take the students' point of view into account.

University administration courses in Japan are still in their infancy. It will be interesting to see how they develop in future.

References

- Fujita, Y.(2008). Staff training: JAPUC experiments, [Syokuin no Ikusei: Sidairen no Kokoromi], *IDE*, 499, 31–35.(in Japanese)
- Hata, T.(2010). Challenges facing higher education research and the functions of university administrators, [KotoKyoiku Kenkyu to Daigaku Syokuin Ron no Kadai], *Japanese Journal of Higher Education Research*, 13, 23–41.(in Japanese)
- Honma, M.(2008). Management issues and the new staff model, [Manegiment no Kadai to Aratana Syokuin Zo], *IDE*, 499, 25–30.(in Japanese)
- Kaneko, M.(2008). Views on university staff, [Daigaku Syokuin no Tenbo], *IDE*, 499, 4–10.(in Japanese)
- Oba, J.(2009). Specialisation of university staff in Japan, [Nihon niokeru Daigaku Syokuin Senmon Syokuka], In J. Oba (ed) *Developing staff in universities :Identity and professionalism*, [Daigaku Syokuin no Kaihatsu: Senmonsyoikuka wo megutte],13–23. Hiroshima:RIHE.(in Japanese)
- Tachi, A.(2008). University staff theory, [Daigaku Syokuin Ron], *IDE*, 499, 60–66.(in Japanese)
- Terasaki, M.(2010). On the activity of staff development (SD) in Japan, [Daigaku Syokuin no Noryoku Kaihatsu heno Siron], *Japanese Journal of Higher Education Research*, 13, 7–21.(in Japanese)
- Yamamoto, S.(2008). University staff going forward, [Korekara no Daigaku Syokuin], *IDE*, 499,11–5.(in Japanese)

- 논문접수 : 2010년 8월 17일 / 수정본 접수 9월 10일 / 게재 승인 9월 22일
- Masahiro Tanaka: University of London에서 박사학위를 취득하였고, 일본 Hirosaki University 교수로 재직하고 있음. 주요 관심분야는 고등교육 및 비교교육 등임. e-mail: masatana@cc.hirosaki-u.ac.jp

요 약

일본의 대학 행정가 교육 프로그램 연구

Masahiro Tanaka(Hirosaki University)

본 연구는 일본의 대학 행정가들을 위한 새로운 고등교육행정 프로그램에 대해 다루고 있다. 일본에서 이와 같은 종류의 교육 프로그램이 뒤늦게 발달한 이유는 전통적으로 일본 대학의 행정직원에게 전문화가 요구되지 않았기 때문이라고 분석된다. 이러한 전통은 현재 일본 대학들 간의 극심한 경쟁 때문에 급속히 사라지고 있는데, 이는 대학 행정가의 전문화가 경쟁에서 살아남는 데 중요한 역할을 하고 있기 때문이다. 이러한 이유로 일본 사회에서는 대학 행정가들을 위한 더 나은 교육 프로그램이 요구되고 있다. 이러한 논의에 관한 본 논문은 1) 일본에서의 ‘대학 행정가’의 정의; 2) 대학 행정가로서의 행정직원의 훈련 전통; 3) 대학 행정과 관련된 세 가지 고등교육행정 프로그램; 4) 결론 등의 네 부분으로 구성되어 있다.

주제어: 고등교육, 대학 행정가, 일본