The Development of Student Faculty Development (FD) and its Limitations in Japan

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Japanese Universities (May 2015)

Number of Institutions

	National	Local Public	Private	Total
Universities	86	90	606	782
Junior Colleges	0	19	340	359

Number of Freshmen

	National	Local Public	Private	Total
Universities	100,940	30,044	483,199	614,183
Junior Colleges	0	3,431	61,222	64,653

Enrolment Rate in Universities and Junior Colleges

	Male	Female	Total
Universities and Junior Colleges	55.1%	55.2%	55.1%

Student Engagement In Japan

Hironaka Report (1)

❖ **In June 2000, the Ministry of Education (MEXT) published a report entitled *Enrichment of Student Life in Universities* (the Hironaka Report) to reshape universities in a more student-centred way.**

❖ **This report advocated the "importance of appropriately reflecting the students' wishes and opinions in the management of the university" (MEXT 2000).**

❖ **More specifically, it proposed:**

1. Conducting student surveys
2. Hosting round-table discussions with students
3. Incorporating student engagement.

Hironaka Report (2)

❖ **The report, however, indicated the difficulty in implementing #3 while recommending that universities move forward with #1 and #2:**

▪ In Europe and North America, university student representatives have traditionally been recognised as legitimate members of the university management and students are granted the right to participate in a wide range of activities within it. In Japan, however, the history of our education as well as the compatibility between such a system and the current decision-making process at universities needs to be taken into account before it can be adopted at the present time. It would therefore be advisable to be cautious when considering its introduction. Rather, it may be more effective to create opportunities for university students to express their wishes and opinions on topics on which it is appropriate for students to comment such as the course content/delivery method and student life, which would then be reflected as much as possible in the management of the university. (MEXT 2000)

Okayama University

- ❖ **In June 2001, Okayama University established the Student-Staff FD Task Force, which includes students as official participating members.**

- ❖ **This Task Force evolved into the Student-Staff FD Committee in 2004, making it an equal of a traditional staff-only FD Advisory Committee (Amano 2012: 106).**

- ❖ **Creation of this committee is an actualization of suggestion #3 in the Hironaka Report.**

- ❖ **Other national universities attempted to create similar committees but were unable to sustain them long-term.**

Student FD (1)

❖ **The "student FD" model (realisation of suggestion #2) later became more widespread among private universities.**

❖ **According to Kino (2012: 91-8), student FD includes:**

- round-table discussions between students and faculty members (forums)
- course introductions presented by students
- proposals made by students to improve course content
- peer support (learning support systems among students)
- proposals made by students to improve the living and learning environment
- PR for the student FD (including public advertisement to recruit student participants)

Student FD (2)

❖ **A unique characteristic of the student FD is that its participants are publicly recruited student volunteers rather than official executive members of the university.**

❖ **Some advantages of involving volunteer members are:**

1. Participating students demonstrate a high level of awareness
2. Student autonomy is respected
3. Existing committees made up of faculty members need not be reorganized.

❖ **However, student volunteers do not have decision-making power (voting rights).**

❖ **Furthermore, the student FD "needs to be fun" (Ozaki 2012: 143) in order to keep attracting volunteers.**

Criticism of Student FD

- **Oki (2013) categorises the student FD model as a type of PBL (project-based learning) or active learning course.**

- **Umemura (2012) also admits that the student FD may not be successful as an FD activity.**

- **However, Umemura (2012: 193) contends that personal growth in the participating students has been phenomenal, and adds:**

  - "I believe that personal growth in each individual student will serve as an agent of change for the classes and, ultimately, the university".
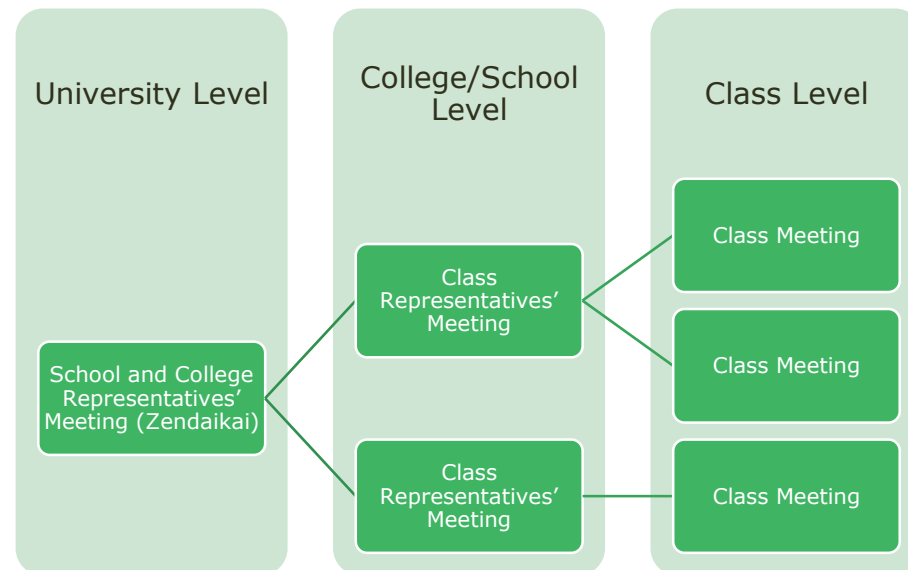
Case Study at the University of Tsukuba

University of Tsukuba (1)

❖ **The University of Tsukuba is divided into nine schools comprising 24 colleges.**

❖ **These colleges are subdivided into classes with an assigned instructor for each.**

❖ **Each level of the structure has its own student organisation:**

University Level	College/School Level	Class Level
		Class Meeting
	Class Representatives' Meeting	Class Meeting
School and College Representatives' Meeting (Zendaikai)		
	Class Representatives' Meeting	Class Meeting

University of Tsukuba (2)

❖ **An equivalent faculty member organisation is established to correspond with each official student organisation at the school, college, and university-wide levels:**

- School/College level: Class Coordinating Committee
- University-wide level: Discussions with vice presidents

❖ **These meetings serve as settings for dialogue between the students and faculty members, as well as opportunities for the university to incorporate students' opinions in its decision-making processes.**

The Zendaikai

- **Members of the Class Representatives' Meeting present student requests to the staff of the relevant colleges.**
  - Coin lockers, for instance, were introduced as a result of this presentation.
  - These members also provide support for activities such as the Freshmen Welcome Event and the University Information Session.
- **The Zendaikai involves six committees (General Affairs, School Events, Educational Environment, Living Environment, Survey, and PR).**
  - The Zendaikai is held several times a month to gather input from students, and it presents this input collectively during the meeting with vice presidents held approximately three times a year (Nagaki 2014).

Issues

❖ **One issue facing official student organisations is that some segments of the Class Meeting or Class Representatives' Meeting can be less active than others.**

  ▪ When this occurs, discussion during the Zendaikai will no longer be based on collective consensus (Nagaki 2014).

❖ **No voting rights for students is also problematic.**

❖ **Students' requests can occasionally be unrealistic, due in part to their lack of knowledge of the university's rules and regulations.**

❖ **Finally, the Zendaikai includes only undergraduate students; it excludes postgraduate students.**

TGN (1)

❖ **Postgraduate students created the unofficial Tsukuba Graduate Students' Network (TGN).**

❖ **The TGN has hosted the "Graduate Students' Presentation Battle", aiming to improve students' presentation skills.**

❖ **The TGN has also submitted a request to establish common courses for postgraduate students to foster cross-field communication skills.**

- Notably, a course entitled "The Presentation: Acquiring Research Presentation Skills that Connect with Others" was created in 2012 (Matsubara 2015).

TGN (2)

❖ **Issues regarding the TGN are twofold:**

1. The TGN is not officially recognized, and thus cannot receive any regular budget from the University

2. No established system exists for recruiting new volunteer members, which may hurt the TGN's longevity.

❖ **Some of their requests, such as establishing a future-faculty preparation (FFP) program, require very close collaboration with the university, which is difficult without an official line of communication.**

Summary

Summary (1)

❖ **Student unions have little power and there has been virtually no movement in which students demanded the right to engage at the macro-level.**

❖ **Furthermore, student engagement has not yet been systematically implemented at the meso-level.**

❖ **However, some cases of student involvement in FD activities can be new attempts at student engagement at the micro-level.**

▪ Healey (2010) characterise student engagement at three levels:

- Micro: engagement in their own learning and that of other students
- Meso: engagement in quality assurance and enhancement processes
- Macro: engagement in strategy development

Summary (2)

❖ **The information schools obtain through student FD activities merely serve to supplement the information obtained by conducting traditional student surveys.**

❖ **I thus suggest that the university may need to ask students anew whether the current situation is what they desire.**

Thank you for listening

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