

[論文]

Japanese University Reform and the Place of Faculty Development?

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ABSTRACT

The so-called 'third wave' of university reform is now well underway in Japan. The pressures for reform appear to be many, with the underlying source being financial. The central government claims to want to foster the development of 'world-class' institutions, while slashing its funding of the university system. Japanese generally regard the university system in the United States to be the best model currently available to emulate. As a consequence, American ideas for university reform have once again been imported by the Japanese system. Faculty development (FD) aimed at improving undergraduate teaching is one such idea. This paper outlines the background to the current reforms and examines the now fashionable focus on FD through the lens of American experience. A series of questions about improving teaching through FD programs concludes the paper.

Key Words : faculty development (FD), higher education reform, teaching improvement

Japanese universities are in a state of flux. Fundamental reforms have been initiated that cover broad areas such as the improvement of the quality of undergraduate education, the expansion of graduate education, and the introduction of evaluation systems. Entrance examination systems also have changed and even general education units have been abolished (Ogawa, 2002). In this highly fluid situation, many of those involved in Japanese higher education long for more direction.

Obviously there are no simple remedies for this highly complex situation. The situation in question is that of Japanese higher educational institutions in the early twenty-first century. The principal concern of this paper is university teaching. Good

teaching is a motherhood issue. No one is against it. The problems affecting good teaching are inertia, overcoming fear of change, and the fact that faculty priorities may be elsewhere. Making good teaching an institutional priority requires changing values, behaviours and academic norms. This brief article begins with a look at the push for reform in Japanese universities. Following this is a synopsis of the American literature on faculty development and general descriptions of the current state of faculty development in Japan focused on pedagogical questions. The paper concludes with some basic questions about faculty development programs.

The Push for Reform

Since former Prime Minister Nakasone's government formed the Ad Hoc Council on Educational Reform (*Rinji Kyoiku Shingikai*) in the 1980s, higher education reforms have accelerated in Japan. Following the Ad Hoc Council's recommendation, the Ministry of Education established the University Council (*Daigaku Shingikai*) in 1986. The University Council (UC) is an advisory group of experts including representatives from labour and industry. The UC has promoted policies designed to liberalize higher education and published at least 25 reports between 1987 and 2000 (Tsuruta, 2003). After the University Establishment Standards were relaxed in 1991, universities were allowed more freedom to develop curriculum. At the same time, the government asked for increased accountability in the form of evaluations. The UC strongly supported a policy of diversified, decentralized systems of university assessment as consistent with institutional preferences for academic freedom and autonomy. Among the ultimate objectives of the reform policy is to improve the quality of Japanese higher education by creating distinctive, world-class academic institutions.

Pressure for university reform comes not only from the central government, but has been fueled partly by the reality of Japan's rapidly declining birthrate (*shooshika*). Given the current trend, the number of university applicants will likely equal places available by the end of the decade (Itoh, 2002). This is despite the fact that Japanese higher education has reached a state of 'massification' with over 50%

of high school graduates enrolled at tertiary institutions (Arimoto, 2001). In addition to stronger recruitment efforts, universities in Japan also now have a greater sense of the need to retain students that are enrolled. This speaks directly to the quality of university programs and teaching. That is, to attract and retain good students, universities should have interesting curricula taught by effective teachers. This intensifying struggle amongst Japanese universities to recruit and retain students has led to an unprecedented round of curriculum reform, as well as a new experimentation with faculty development (FD). The focus of these particular reforms appears to be with changing the predominant self-image of university faculty members' from that of researcher (*kenkyuusha*) to teacher (*kyoikusha*). Let us consider the experience of American higher education next.

Faculty Development in the United States

Teaching versus Research

Some observers have commented that the movement to make Japanese universities more flexible and market-oriented is based on the 'American mode' (Arimoto, 1997, p. 43). Itoh (2002, p. 24) went so far as to call it the 'Americanization' of the Japanese higher education system. Given the obvious importance of the so-called 'American model' of higher education in the Japanese context, it would seem instructive to consider part of the American experience with FD and how this might relate to the current situation in Japan.

Complaints about the poor quality of teaching in British, American and Canadian universities have continued now for decades.

The American college teacher is the only high-level professional man (or woman) ... who enters upon a career with neither the prerequisite trial of competence nor experience in the use of the tools of his (or her) profession. (Blegen & Cooper, 1950, p. 123)

In the United States, this concern resulted in a wave of research on the work of university faculty members. Some of the most high profile studies were conducted

by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Under the leadership of Ernest Boyer, The Carnegie Foundation published two seminal studies (Boyer, 1990 ; Glassick, Huber, Maeroff, 1997).

Boyer's passion was to restore the formerly privileged focus on undergraduate education that many American universities lost following the Second World War. The initial source of this change can be found in the late nineteenth century after many Americans who had done advanced study in Europe returned to the United States. These scholars were profoundly influenced by the research orientation of the German university and wanted to develop a similar model in the United States (Fallon, 1980). Emphasis on research and graduate education did not really take hold, however, until universities assisted the federal government in the effort to win the Second World War. Researchers at some universities with large engineering and science departments started the bonanza of military research during a time when the country was in great need of such service. After the war, the federal government was urged to continue to fund university research in the interest of national security (Boyer, 1990). Boyer described this revolution in academia thus: "at many of the nation's four-year institutions, the focus had moved from the student to the professoriate, from general to specialized education, and from loyalty to the campus to loyalty to the profession" (p. 13). Once science had successfully identified itself with the national interest in the United States, research became a model for faculty work that began to spread across the entire academic community (Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, 1997).

In the second Carnegie volume, Glassick, Huber and Maeroff (1997) detail how Boyer's (1990) four broad areas of scholarship can fairly be assessed. They warn against excessive use of statistics and an "undue emphasis on student course evaluations" that in fact may shortchange teaching (Glassick, Huber & Maeroff, p. 20). The reality is that there has been a lot of rhetoric about the need to improve teaching, but when faculty are promoted "little attention is given to the candidate's teaching performance" (Seldin, 1990a, p. 4). The second Carnegie book aimed to show faculty members and administrators that teaching and research can be

integrated and fairly evaluated.

In the current climate that demands institutions to promote themselves to domestic and international communities, research is further privileged over teaching. This is so because the products of good research and scholarship are much more visible and quantifiable than those of good teaching. This means that an institution's prestige is enhanced more readily by recruiting outstanding scholars than by recruiting outstanding teachers. It can be argued that the incessant pressure for academics to publish leeches limited time, energy, as well as financial resources from efforts to improve classroom instruction since: "many faculty members engage in research and publish articles not because they have anything important to say but because they need publications for their vitae" (Seldin, 1990a, p. 7). Furthermore, Cross (1986) confirms that new journals are started not to share knowledge, but simply to provide university faculty members with venues for publication.

Promoting Good Teaching

The second-class status of teaching is embodied in many faculty development systems that "have focused almost exclusively on helping professors master subject matter" (Seldin, 1990a, p. 16). Closing the credibility gap between talking about good teaching and actively supporting it represents a major undertaking. Former Harvard University president Derek Bok (1986) stresses that to build a university environment that encourages and rewards good teaching requires a huge administrative effort to place teaching and scholarship on an equal footing.

As Rice and Austin (1990) have shown, smaller liberal arts colleges in the United States have strong records of building environments that support good teaching. They found a significant correlation between faculty morale and teaching motivation at liberal arts institutions. However, at the larger research universities they studied, their findings were different. While allowing that "the most respected and rewarded faculty generally are star researchers" (Rice & Austin, p. 34), they suggest that three critical factors stand out as important for motivating faculty at research universities toward good teaching. The first factor mirrors findings in smaller

schools that teaching needs to be strongly valued and supported by an institution. Secondly, the leaders of an institution must make high-profile promotions of teaching and provide incentives for faculty to value teaching. Finally, interaction between faculty members and administrators who are committed to teaching needs to be encouraged.

Evaluation certainly forms a major component of most faculty development systems. In fact, American universities are so focused on evaluation that complaints about filling out forms and reports pervade higher education. A major fear among faculty is whether the evaluative information intended for self-improvement will be used in personnel reviews. Menges (1990) argues that for evaluations to help improve instruction, “the teacher should be in charge of information” (p. 105). The necessity of teacher involvement and control is cited repeatedly in the literature on faculty development from US-based sources.

Discussion: Promoting Faculty Development in Japan

Perceptions on Current Reforms

Hargreaves (1995) describes teacher development in the postmodern world as a challenge of dynamic proportions:

To understand teacher development at the turn of the millennium is to understand it in a peculiarly exhilarating and terrifying time of accelerating change, intense compression of time and space, cultural diversity, economic flexibility, technological complexity, organizational fluidity, moral and scientific uncertainty, and national insecurity. (p. 13)

A somewhat chaotic atmosphere is evident on the campuses of Japanese universities today as well. There has been a sharp decrease in the number of high school graduates. Professors regularly complain about the waning intellectual ability of the students in their classes. Funding is shifting or being cut. The civil servant status of faculty and staff at national universities, as well as automatic tenure are under threat. In a job market that has remained stubbornly sluggish for over 10

years, students today are more conscious than ever before about the ‘marketability’ of their university educational experience. In contrast to this, Arimoto (2001, p. 9) calls Japan a ‘degree-ocratic society’ in which, “names, brands, labels of institutions tend to be highly valued, [so that] less attention has been paid to university teaching regarding its content, added-value, quality, or even its social accountability.”

At the stage of so-called massification where more than 50% of high school graduates can now gain entrance to a university, Japanese higher education is increasingly expected to move in the direction of integrating the functions of research, teaching and learning. Even so, the research paradigm continues to be dominant.

To gauge the success of the current round of reform we should consider both student and faculty opinions. Changes in the makeup of the student body at Japanese tertiary institutions make it plain that innovation in teaching is essential. But students appear to be largely indifferent to the current reforms. Arimoto (1997) has stressed the lack of Japanese student interest in teaching reforms and the likely impact of this apathy on teaching improvement: “without student’s support to faculty members, no teaching innovation will be accomplished” (p. 39).

As for university faculty members in Japan: “Most are generally indifferent to the institutionalisation of FD as well as self-evaluation, though actual implementation of reforms demands their participation. Behind this climate, there exists the fact that they are more committed to research than to teaching” (Arimoto, 2001, p. 9). Thus, administrators are keen on the new FD models sweeping through Japanese higher education, while students and professors remain unimpressed. This appears to be evidence of the classical top-down model of decision making at work. The question is: Can FD be imposed? That is, can bureaucratic force be used to make faculty members develop their teaching in ways that are meaningful and sincere?

When even at the junior college level faculty members “are much more inclined to commit themselves to research than to teaching” (Arimoto, 2001, p. 5), it is clear that the research-oriented university model enjoys great favour amongst academics in Japan. With the prestige of institutions almost solely determined by levels of

research grants, the award system for faculty is dominantly related to research production, not teaching innovation and learning achievement. With the current budget-tightening cuts in government subsidies to universities, this trend will only strengthen (Murasawa, 2002). Therefore, the stated goal of improving teaching on Japanese university campuses seems to lack the necessary commitment of financial resources. A fundamental change in funding allocations may be needed to promote teaching reform.

Development of the Reform Process to Date

To promote the goal of improving the quality of university education in Japan, the government's University Council (UC) has listed three areas for attention: reinforcement of teaching; promotion of research and teaching of an international standard; and responding to the development of a lifelong learning society. One of the stated objectives for the reinforcement of the teaching function is raising the standard of the faculty's teaching ability and morale through the introduction of FD. As a result, "faculty development, or FD, focusing on improvement of the teaching ability and skill of faculty members has been institutionalised as a kind of obligation in every institution by UC's recommendation" (Arimoto, 2001, p. 9). This reaction by university administrators begs the question; for whose benefit is FD being promoted in Japanese junior colleges and universities?

In the bigger reform picture, faculty have largely not been involved in the decision to transform the National Universities into Semi-independent Administrative Agencies. Such lack of participation can result in a weak understanding of the reforms and their implementation. This lack of involvement, coupled with the sudden obligatory implementation of FD programs on university campuses, suggests that faculty support for innovations such as FD may be weak at best. Since reliability and trust are the main determinants of the effectiveness of university governance, faculty inclusion in governance processes is essential. Without beginning reforms from an open starting point, it is difficult to imagine a successful outcome. Simply put, in the absence of clearly laid out, mutually agreed

upon goals, the stakeholders in the process may very well be working at cross-purposes.

Behind this process is the reality that while the need for reform has been couched in terms of improving quality, a major force for change is financial and not educational. Governments want to pay less and get more. Conversely, a primary reason touted by the Japanese government for the current reforms is the desire to see Japanese universities compete on a global basis. This challenging goal is not backed up, however. Japan spent only 0.9% of its gross national income on higher education in 1997. That was only 45-75% of what other OECD nations spent. If the budget for higher education is further reduced, Japan's higher education system will never achieve global standards (Murasawa, 2002).

This paradox is illustrative of the highly centralized education system in Japan. The top-down system managed by Tokyo-based bureaucrats can lead to a situation where enforcing conformity to the UC rules becomes the end in itself, rather than the rules being used to support some higher purpose. This classic bureaucratic pathology of the means-ends reversal should be avoided at all costs. Instead more organic organizational approaches should be considered for the development of effective programs for teaching improvement.

Faculty colleagues need to share with each other their perspectives on teaching with respect and candor. More importantly, they need to be clear about the goals of any FD program (Guskey, 1995). For FD to be sustainable, it is essential to have specific procedures to provide meaningful feedback on results. It would seem self-evident that, "New practices are likely to be abandoned [by faculty] in the absence of any evidence of their positive effects" (Guskey, pp. 121-122). Huberman and Guskey (1995, p. 269) echo the sentiment of Menges (1990) on the need for teachers to control the FD agenda: "there is an implicit thesis of inadequacy in most [FD] programs ... teachers are not in control of the agenda by which they are 'developed'". To improve instruction, ratings of teaching by students are not enough. Menges proposes that diagnostic information be specific enough that it can help to identify what ought to be changed, as well as suggesting the kinds of changes

that could be effective.

The Ministry of Education in Japan promotes rational management systems as the means through which to reform universities here, but it is important to keep in mind that many of the things that can be measured are not important, and many of the things that are important cannot be measured. That is, a ‘scientific’ approach and rational systems derived from a behavioural knowledge-base might not be the best tools to bring about desired changes in human behaviour. A key lesson to be learned from the American experience is that proposals to rationalize governance in U.S. institutions almost always sound reasonable and self-evident. However, when they conflict with the realities of cultural expectations, they inevitably fail. Robert Birnbaum (2000) detailed five academic management systems that he personally worked with during his career from 1960 (Planning Programming Budgeting System) to 2000 (Benchmarking). Each one of the systems he describes in his book started out with boasts of higher efficiency and ended with a series of disappointing excuses for failure. In short, these management systems went against the culture of academic organizations.

In fact, it is very difficult to transform a cultural value for research directly into one for teaching, and while the Ministry of Education has explicitly stated the need to improve teaching, it is unclear how it will attempt to implement its intentions. So far, the reforms that the education ministry has set in motion appear to focus mainly on structural changes. However, good teaching involves much more than can be captured in the statistics of evaluations and academic reports. It has an emotional heart: “Beyond technique and moral purpose, what makes good teaching is desire” (Hargreaves, 1995, p. 21). Yet, most FD initiatives ignore the emotional basis of teaching. One danger in not considering the feelings of teachers is that the momentum for FD might reverse or be retarded if teachers are made to feel exposed, vulnerable and ashamed.

Rather than more administrative systems, what is truly needed at this time of monumental social change is a great deal of thoughtful discussion on the purposes and goals of higher education. In the absence of negotiated definitions of effective

instruction, and discussions on purposes and goals of higher education, university professors and students instead find themselves forced to deal with a number of standardized forms and rating surveys that provide a huge amount of statistical data. Student ratings, however, are best used as one of a number of sources of data about a professor's teaching. The best evidence of improved instruction is improved student learning. Therefore, one of the most important actions university administrators can take to improve teaching is to assess it accurately and reward it publicly. It hardly seems credible for institutions to pay lip service to teaching, while choosing to reward research and scholarship exclusively.

Questions for Consideration

I would like to end this paper with several questions that those concerned with promoting FD for teaching improvement might ponder. First, for FD programs to have a positive effect, it is vital to make the purposes transparent at the outset. For example, is the program merely an attempt to manipulate an institution's image, or is it a genuine effort at improving the teaching and learning experience? If it is the latter, then the purposes of the program need to be negotiated with representative bodies of faculty members and students. Numerous studies of FD programs point to the importance of faculty ownership and involvement. Faculty development programs stand a better chance of success if they are developed in direct response to faculty concerns.

Second, given the change in the student profile at Japanese universities, the basic question that must be asked at the institutional level is, what constitutes effective teaching. At a personal level, instead of asking "What should I do in class today?" teachers might ask, "How should students be different at the end of this lesson/course?" Simply put, professors need to take greater account of student needs in lesson planning. The old adage remains true: teach the students you have, rather than pining for those you would ideally like to teach.

Third, what is the administration doing to create a positive environment for teaching? Is the stated concern about teaching improvement backed up with

adequate resources for teachers? Are examples of ‘effective’ teaching approaches available for teachers to access? Do items on course evaluation forms have corresponding lists of suggestions for overcoming difficulties compiled from experienced teachers at the institution? Is good teaching publicly rewarded in the same way as research production?

Finally, how are future university educators trained as teaching professionals during their graduate education?

If college and university teaching are to be improved, graduate schools must introduce effective programs for preparing teachers. There is no alternative. The fact is, the typical graduate school program ... does not help the new teacher identify and develop a style of teaching. (Seldin, 1990b, p. 209)

Teachers often teach using the same methods they experienced themselves as students. This is true especially of university-based teachers. In the United States, many universities have acknowledged this and now require graduate students in any field to take courses in pedagogy. Improvement of teaching is a worthy goal and is arguably long overdue at Japanese universities. The current reforms have opened the door to change, but there remain a great many obstacles to realizing a genuine movement toward the improvement of teaching.

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