

Decoding “Faculty-Staff Cooperation” in Japanese Universities

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Abstract

Since 2016, and officially defined by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in 2022, “faculty-staff cooperation” has been promoted as the core of Japanese university reform. This concept demands the professionalization of staff members and “the equal partnership” between faculty and staff members. This concept seems unusual internationally, because the roles of faculty and staff members are traditionally distinct and separated by clear boundaries.

This article historically and internationally examines the history of the management structure of Japanese universities and the reasons behind the introduction of the concept of “faculty-staff cooperation.” The popularization of higher education, shrinking budgets, a decreasing number of children, increasing competition, and the pressure to pursue excellence necessitate professionalizing management and student services. The article argues that Japanese universities require professionalized staff members and a clear division of labor while maintaining the tradition of membership and in-house training. The concept of “faculty-staff cooperation” involves reconsidering the low status of staff members and transferring authorities from faculty to staff.

The article’s thesis is that “faculty-staff cooperation” is a combination of organizational reform and the pursuit of excellence under existing conditions. It is not about work- sharing; rather, it is raising the status of staff members through professionalization and division of labor. “Faculty-staff cooperation” reflects the Japanese preference for the sense of community and human relationships. In this regard, it differs from “shared governance” between academic staff and administrators in American universities, where the location of authority is always an issue.

Literature Review

In 2013, Shinichi Yamamoto defined “faculty-staff cooperation” as the shared pursuit of common goals and equal participation in planning and execution, rather than merely a division of labor (Yamamoto, 2013). The same year, Naoyuki Ogata analyzed a national survey and found out that the necessity of the cooperation varies by field of work. It is high in student affairs, university hospitals, and academic affairs, and low in general and financial affairs (Ogata, 2013). In 2022, the MEXT revised the University Establishment Law defining the cooperation as a coalition and cooperation between staff and faculty members under an appropriate division of labor. In 2024, Shinji Fukushima conducted a survey of faculty and staff members, and found that they are not only interested in organizational reforms such as incentives and career paths but also in human relationships such as emotional bonds and mutual respect (Fukushima, 2024).

Jun Oba had already distinguished Japanese universities from American ones, claiming the latter are different in terms of staffing and financial resources. He also said that American universities are strictly based on the principle of division of labor among faculty members, professionals, and administrators. The power balance among university constituents is maintained by the negotiation, or shared governance (Oba, 2014).” In 2004, Robert Birnbaum had distinguished “hard” governance from “soft”

governance (Birnbaum 2004). Shared governance is a part of soft governance which is based on consultation between faculty members and administrators rather than authorities and top-down decisions. It should be noted that shared governance includes both faculty members and administrators..

Birnbaum is concerned with the attrition of shared governance in spite of its efficiency and procedural legitimacy but because of its damage to status, moral authority, and human relationships. His argument suggests that American styles of organizational structures, divisions of labor, professionalization, and resource inputs do not necessarily guarantee optimal management and outcomes. As long as faculty members conduct teaching and research, administrators cannot disregard their cooperation and understanding. Therefore, this article does not merely measure Japanese universities based on the American model. Rather, it attempts to articulate the characteristics of management in Japanese universities by analyzing “faculty-staff cooperation” and its implication for university reform.

Currently administrators such as deans, vice-presidents, and presidents are homegrown in Japanese universities. Having been at the same university for a long time, they represent faculty members rather than manage them. According to social psychologist Toshio Yamagishi, claimed that Japanese society values collectivism, sense of security, and long-term relationships (Yamagishi 2011). However, this attitude is more appropriate for a closed, intimate, and stable society than for one that requires trust based on information, social intelligence, and principles. This theory can be applied to Japanese universities, which are currently experiencing transformations from membership communities into merit-based organizations.

This article refers to the results of surveys conducted by the Center for Research on University Management and Policy (CRUMP) at the University of Tokyo. CRUMP regularly conducts national surveys of faculty members, staff members, and administrators and provides valuable information about the management of Japanese universities.

Background

Until 1969, Japanese universities maintained a dual structure of faculty dominance and staff subordination. This structure persisted until Japan reached the mass stage of higher education development. Before then, university attendance rate was under 15%. Students were highly independent and needed minimal support from universities. Faculty members enjoyed ultimate autonomy symbolized by the Humboldtian ideal of scholarly freedom and solitude. They focused on their research. At that time, faculty meetings had final authority over most affairs including budgeting, planning, and resource allocation, based on the assumption that faculty members were knowledgeable enough about these matters through their academic training.

In this context, staff members were in a subordinate position, simply following orders from faculty members or their superiors. Most were high school graduates performing routine work such as counter operations, registration, documentation, bursary, and facility management. Some staff members

assisted faculty members with legal, financial, academic, and student affairs due to their experience, but their expertise was not officially recognized. In this environment, there were few incentives for staff to develop their professional skills. The distinction between faculty and staff members was also marked by the Confucian status hierarchy of intellectuals and manual laborers. Before World War II, the knowledge and ability gap between faculty and staff members was enormous and the idea of their cooperation was inconceivable.

Historical Development

1948-1969: The Elitist Stage

The postwar higher education system began in Japan in 1948. By upgrading and consolidating polytechnics, normal schools, medical schools, and prewar high schools, the university attendance rate increased from 2% to 6%. Until 1969 when the university attendance reached 15%, Japanese higher education was highly selective, operating under a *laissez-faire* approach. During this time, faculty autonomy was highly respected and faculty members influenced university management through their veto power. During this period, universities were not fully aware of the necessity of student support, internationalization, teaching reform, evaluation, quality assurance, management, public relations, and administrative efficiency. Without much support from faculty and staff members, students at the elitist stage were competent enough to acquire academic and professional skills and find jobs on their own.

1969: The Catalyst

The year 1969 marked a period of student revolts, and Japanese higher education transitioned from an elitist to a mass stage. The end of the elitist era prompted the Ministry of Education to advocate for administrative reform and staff development to address higher education issues. The Central Education Committee (1969) stressed the necessity of the training opportunities, recognition, and better remuneration for staff members as professionals. At this point, faculty members began to realize that they could not control university affairs, that universities were responsible for their own management, that the *laissez-faire* approach to education was no longer acceptable, and that staff members should be professionalized.

1991: Deregulation

The Ministry of Education revised the University Establishment Law in 1991. The establishment of new universities was relaxed, and universities were given more freedom to design curricula and open graduate schools. Evaluation and accreditation systems were also introduced. This policy change shifted higher education from pre-screening to post-evaluation and from government control to market principles. Since 1991, many universities have been established, and the university attendance rate has increased from 25% to 60% to date. While universities were less controlled by the government, they were also less protected. They were required to chart their own courses, taking on more responsibility.

The deregulation of higher education coincided with the fundamental changes in university education. University students were no longer mature, motivated, independent, or academically prepared. In 2000, the Ministry of Education published a report advocating the concept of the student-centered education and emphasizing the importance of teaching, student support, and career guidance (Ministry of Education, 2000). To this end, the report recommended faculty development to improve teaching, an advising system for students, teaching assistants (TAs), student counseling, and teaching evaluations. The report also stated that these extra-curricular student services required cooperation between faculty and staff members. By then, the number of staff members who had graduated from universities had increased. They were expected to play more active roles in academic and student affairs on par with faculty members.

The final stage of deregulation was the corporatization of national universities in 2006. Although the government continued to provide financial support, national university employees were no longer civil servants. Governmental subsidies were distributed based on performance and reviews, and many universities had to find external resources for basic operations. Since basic research funds for faculty members were cut, faculty had to apply for competitive research funds, such as JSPS Grants-in-Aids. Thus, pressure to pursue excellence was placed at the institutional and individual faculty levels. Consequently, faculty members began to focus more on research and avoid administrative duties.

2014 and 2023: Governance Reform

In 2014, the MEXT (formerly the Ministry of Education, established in 2001) revised the School Education Act, which stipulated the strong presidential leadership. At traditional Japanese universities, vice presidents and deans were representatives of faculty members and served short terms. Since many administrators planned to return to faculty positions, they lacked authority to resist faculty vetoes. To combat this resistance, the MEXT granted presidents strong authority in management, organizational reform, budget allocation, and administrative appointments. Thus, top-down decisions became easier, and faculty meetings gradually lost their veto power.

In 2022, the MEXT revised the University Establishment Law, eliminating the distinction between faculty and staff organizations. The law officially defined the concept of “faculty-staff cooperation” as the coalition and collaboration of staff and faculty members under an appropriate division of labor. This marked a radical shift from traditional faculty dominance over staff members. However, it should be noted that the revision simply eliminated the organizational barrier between faculty and staff members. It did not mention equal status, a friendly relationship, or work sharing between them.

Faculty and staff members interpreted the revision differently from the MEXT. In 2022, the Japanese Association of College and University Education (JACUE) surveyed its members (100 respondents) and asked about the meaning of “faculty-staff cooperation.” Many defined the cooperation as collaboration, mutual respect, no hierarchy, and mutual understanding rather than organizational reform. Respondents including both faculty and staff members expressed concern about the traditional hierarchy, lack of communication, and lack of respect between the two groups. They believed that cooperation should be

established between them. Such an interpretation reflects the Japanese emphasis on intimacy. The survey suggests that the division between faculty and staff members is organizational, historical and social.

Since 1969, a series of government documents have acknowledged that staff members have played marginal roles in universities, focusing on routine tasks. However, to cope with the expansion and complexity of university affairs, staff members were expected to possess professional skills and receive an official approval to engage in university management on par with faculty members. In this sense, term, “faculty-staff cooperation” can be misleading. It does not refer to the division of labor between faculty and staff. Rather, it refers to their equal status. Governmental documents have simply stressed the need for the professional development of staff members, not the work sharing between faculty and staff.

Governance Structure

Japanese universities have traditionally maintained a dual structure of faculty and staff. Faculty members belong to departments and work based on collegiality. Staff members, on the other hand, work within an administrative pyramid structure, with the secretary general at the top. The two groups are clearly separated and cannot interfere with each other. Therefore, even if professionals in student, international, and admissions affairs are brought in, they have a difficulty fitting into the university structure, because they are alienated from both faculty and staff.

Another issue with Japanese universities is the de facto amateurism of administrators. Faculty members serve as vice presidents, deans, chairs, and committee heads for short periods without accumulating expertise and experience. According to the 2020 CRUMP survey of chief academic officers (301 respondents), 47.8% said that they had been in their position for less than four years, despite having worked at the same university for over ten years. Their past presence and experience at the same university are valued more than their individual qualities such as vision and management skills. While serving as CAOs, they teach an average of six courses. This suggests that most CAOs in Japan are internal appointees who serve temporarily before returning to their previous faculty positions. To compensate for their lack of expertise and experience, orders from the Ministry of Education and acceptance of governmental officials are important for both public and private universities.

American universities have established professionalization and the division of labor earlier than Japanese universities did. They set up international, admissions, student support, and administrative offices and bring in professionals from outside to serve as vice presidents, offering high compensation and authority equal to that of faculty members. According to the CAO survey by the American Council on Education, only 52% of CAOs came from their current universities (American Council on Education, 2009). In the U.S., faculty members who become administrators such as deans and vice-presidents, usually leave research and teaching to enter an administrative track. They are distinguished from faculty members as administrators and mobile among universities. Once they finish their term at one university, they can find an administrative position at another. Their experience and expertise are considered to be

universal across universities, and they are seen as bringing new perspectives from outside. Therefore, administrators are clearly distinct from regular faculty members in despite their academic backgrounds. This is the reason why shared governance between faculty members and administrators is an issue in American universities.

In the U.K., it was noted that the number of senior managers and non-academic professionals increased by 60% from 2005 to 2017, while the number of traditional faculty members increased just by 15% (Wolf & Jenkins 2020). This is partly due to the increase in contingent teaching staff. Meanwhile, routine workers decreased by 5% due to outsourcing. In the U.K., professionals and administrators are encroaching on the territory of traditional faculty members, who are being replaced by contingent teaching staff. The increase in professionals and administrators in the U.K. is supported by the growing higher education market which relies on international students who pay three times as much as domestic students.

According to MEXT statistics, traditional staff members increased by 34.1%, and faculty by 16.4% during the same period in Japan. These increases simply reflect the establishment of new universities and does not indicate an increase in both faculty and staff. Since most Japanese universities lack financial resources, they must train existing staff as professionals and administrators.

In the 2016 CRUMP survey of senior administrators (3,996 respondents) found that nearly 80% value the coordinating conflicting interests, as well as vision, strategies, leadership, and persistence. However, only 30% of them assume that universities are training future administrators among faculty and staff members. Half of the respondents had administrative experiences as council members, deans, or committee chairs before becoming senior administrators, and none of them received management training. In this regard, senior administrators still carry the characteristics of faculty representatives.

Faculty Dominance

Japanese universities are managed by faculty members serving as department chairs, deans, committee chairs, vice presidents, presidents, and heads of supporting offices. These offices include international affairs, admissions, and student affairs. These offices are usually managed by committees consisting of faculty members and staff members. Despite the fact that these offices are virtually operated by and managed by staff, faculty make the final decisions.

A 2010 CRUMP survey of faculty members reveals their views on university management. Of the 5,311 respondents, 84.0% said that faculty members should focus on research and teaching by professionalizing staff. This indicates that faculty prefer to leave administrative duties to staff. However, this does not mean that they give up the right to choose presidents; 85.7% of respondents said that presidents should be elected by faculty members. This suggests that Japanese faculty prefer to delegate administrative duties to representatives, rather than to professionals or administrators appointed from outside.

The 2019 CRUMP survey of faculty members (2,829 respondents) shows no significant change in this trend. 63.0% say they prefer to limit their participation in management, while 85.3% insist that presidents should be elected by faculty members. Although they regard the right to vote in presidential elections as a symbol of faculty autonomy, they ignore the fact that presidents are administrators who make decisions irrespective of their academic background.

In the 2023 CRUMP survey of faculty members (590 respondents), faculty members admitted to the rising power of presidents in decision-making (60.7%). However, they did not recognize the power of deans (30.4%) or staff members (40.5%). 45.3% answered that deans are chosen by faculty vote. The survey reveals their mixed attitude toward management. They believe that staff members should have more authority and responsibility (56.8%); that deans should be selected based on the needs of the entire university (69.6%); that the administration should represent faculty members (88.8%); and that faculty members should be divided into teaching, research, and management groups (64.3%). They are critical of reducing the authority of faculty meetings (12.6%), recruiting outsiders for management positions (35.1%), and the administrative track system for faculty members (44.4%). These results suggest that faculty members do not have a clear image of university management.

The 2023 CRUMP survey indicates that faculty members have authority over curriculum design (88.0%), teaching loads (86.1%), and recruitment and promotion (71.5%), but little authority over post allocation (45.6%) and budget allocation (25.7%). Faculty members are concerned about the consistency of university policies (42.0%), communication

between faculty and administration (37.4%), and transparent decision-making (32.5%). There is no clear separation between departmental and university affairs, and faculty members seem to extend their authority to the university level.

The Association of American University Professors (AAUP) is an independent organization representing university constituents. They have advocated for academic autonomy, collective bargaining, and shared governance in the U.S., conducting national surveys on shared governance in 1971, 2001, and 2021. The AAUP defines deans, provosts, and associate provosts as administrators and attempts to determine where authority lies in decision-makings: faculty members, joint authority, or administrators. If department chairs are not selected from among the faculty, they are considered administrators.

The 2021 AAUP survey found that more than half of faculty members do not have exclusive authority over institutional curriculum, course delivery, program establishment, and undergraduate admissions, and promotion and tenure decisions. The survey also revealed a lack of authority among faculty in chair selection, teaching loads, dean selection, post allocation, provost selection, strategic planning, budgeting, and building management.

The survey also analyzes changes in faculty authority over time. Between 1971 and 2021, it increased in departmental curriculum, tenure decisions, faculty searches, chair selection, and teaching loads. The results suggest that faculty autonomy is limited to the department, while university management is left

to administrators. Faculty authority has decreased in collective bargaining issues such as administrator selection, salaries, and teaching loads, while increasing in academic and personnel decisions.

Japanese faculty members consider deans and presidents as their representatives. In such cases, administrators are expected to prioritize collegiality and faculty interest over societal and business needs. This is related to the fact that, since there is no established career path for administrators, deans and vice presents often prioritize faculty interest in order to facilitate their return to teaching positions after serving in administrative roles.

The 2023 CRUMP and 2021 AAUP surveys revel differences in faculty authority between Japanese and American universities (Table 1). While both types of faculty have authority over the program curriculum, American faculty members have less authority over teaching loads and faculty recruitment and promotion. The biggest differences lie in post allocation, budgets, and dean selection. American faculty members have little authority in these areas. These findings suggest that faculty autonomy is stronger in Japanese universities and extends to the school level.

One reason for these differences is that Japanese schools are smaller and have more direct contact with faculty members. Deans still represent of faculty members and do not belong to the administration. In this regard, Japanese deans are closer to American department chairs. While department chairs are the linchpin between faculty and administration, deans are the linchpin in Japan.

Table 1 Comparisons of the Authority of Faculty Members

	2023 CRUMP (Strong + Somewhat Strong)	2021 AAUP (Faculty Dominance + Primacy)
Program Curriculum	88.0%	76.0%
Teaching Loads	87.1%	64.3%
Faculty Recruitment and Promotion	71.5%	Recruitment 61.6% Promotion 32.5%
Post Allocation	45.6%	3.4%
Budgets	25.7%	3.7%
Dean Selection	45.3%	4.9%

Staff Members

For nearly half a century, most staff members were high school graduates who were expected to perform routine tasks. While they were involved in planning and logistics, faculty members made

important decisions. Today, part-time workers take care of most routine work. Full-time staff are now expected to be either professionals or administrators.

Another issue that has prevented staff members from becoming more professional is the generalist principle of the staff career path. Staff members are expected to understand the roles and responsibilities of different sections, as well as build connections across them. While this approach worked well when routine work and human relationships were important, it has prevented staff from specializing in one field.

In the 2023 CRUMP faculty survey, 70.4% of faculty members reported having established a partnerships with staff, yet only 31.3% said they appreciated the staff’s competence. This suggest an absence of expertise among staff. In the 2021 CRUMP staff survey (5,909 respondents), 75.4% answered that they had established trust with faculty members, and 55.8% appreciated “faculty-staff corporation.” Despite their frequent contact, this suggests that faculty and staff members do not necessarily appreciate each other.

The CRUMP surveys from 2010 and 2021 identified general staff trends and changes over time (Table 2). According to the surveys, a merit-based job rotation system, transparent career planning and a reasonable evaluation and reward system have yet to be implemented.

Table 2 Comparisons of the 2010 and 2021 CRUMP Surveys

(Implemented + In Progress)

	2010	2021
Job Rotations Based on Merits and Aptitude	30.7%	30.7%
Description of Career Plan	17.8%	19.7%
Encouragement of Self-Improvement	44.7%	43.4%
Evaluation Standards	31.0%	29.6%
Reasonable Evaluation System	N.A.	36.9%
Rewards Based on Performance	28.7%	N.A.

The 2021 survey revealed two characteristics of private university staff. First, they prefer academic and student, with 23.1% expressing their preference, compared to 15.2% of national university staff members. Another is their enthusiasm for acquiring new skills and knowledge. They spend more time reading and attending seminars. These characteristics suggest a customer-orientated and competitive environment in private universities. In contrast, national and public universities still uphold the tradition of lifetime employment and a seniority-based wage system, which provides staff members with job security .

The same surveys highlight the issues that universities are facing (Table 3). In line with the government’s policy of strengthening presidential leadership, faculty meeting authority has been reduced. This has prompted faculty and staff to collaborate on business strategies. In this sense, presidential leadership has gradually prevailed and achieved its goals. However, contrary to the rise of presidential leadership, the number of staff members who feel the need to conduct independent research and planning has decreased. This may be a drawback of top-down management.

Table 3 Comparisons of 2010 and 2021 CRUMP surveys

☑Agree + Somewhat Agree☑

	2010	2023
Resistance of Faculty Meetings	64.3%	55.2%
The Absence of Shared Business Strategies	71.1%	52.2%
Lack of Presidential Leadership	63.6%	48.7%
More Research and Planning	86.8%	78.6%

The surveys also ask about staff members’ preferences regarding their career path (Table 4). Compared to organizational reforms, the career development of staff members has been stagnated. Whether they later become professionals or administrators, staff members value generalist training early in their careers. They want an equal status with faculty members and are expect mobility among universities through professionalization. This suggests a dilemma of staff members between generalist and professional expectations because both mobility and partnership with faculty necessitate professionalization. Staff members are still transitioning from generalists to professionals.

Table 4 Comparisons of 2010 and 2023 CRUMP Surveys

(Agree + Somewhat Agree)

	2010	2013
Generalists First and Then Managers	85.8%	85.9%
Generalists First and Then Specialists	90.4%	91.1%
Specialists Throughout Career	34.0%	37.2%
Separation Between Specialists and Routine Workers	65.1%	66.3%
Specialization at a Certain Stage	88.1%	88.1%
Equal Status of Faculty and Staff Members on Committees	92.3%	88.9%
Planning and Proposal Training	94.1%	95.1%
Professionalization and Mobility Among Staff Members	69.8%	68.1%

Clearly, staff members are struggling to work without clear goals and career prospects. This is because Japanese universities have yet to establish a human resource management system. This is related to the strong authority of faculty meetings and the administrators' lack of expertise. Japanese universities must find the best mix of generalist and specialist training to offer staff members.

To understand Japanese preference for generalists and human relationships, one must examine their work values. According to a global survey of young Asian workers (9,790 respondents), Japanese workers value human relationships and job descriptions more than Asian workers, who are more interested in salaries and benefits (Recruit 2013).

Another survey conducted by the Kanazawa University Staff Union in 2024 examined other aspects of full-time staff members (87 respondents). Kanazawa University is a local national university. 81.2% of the respondents are satisfied with the university and their work. They appreciate communication with colleagues, mutual respect, a sense of achievement, collaborating with colleagues, and open discussion. However, they are not necessarily interested in proposing new ideas, training opportunities, remote work, sharing the university's vision and purpose, or finding meaning in working for a university. The survey results reveal that staff members' attitude do not necessarily align with the university's enthusiasm for organizational reform to pursue excellence and performance. Staff members at national universities still have the traditional mindset of civil servants, who value stability and security.

The Expanding Perimeter of Higher Education

The popularization of higher education has expanded its roles to include student recruitment, learning support, and career guidance. Compared to the previous, more elitist stage of higher education, students now require an advising system and mental health counseling. As the number of universities increases and the competition among them intensifies, universities are trying to improve the quality of teaching, research, student services, local engagement, research performance, and internationalization. Some universities are attracting high school students with new programs and appealing campus facilities.

Faculty members are trained as academics. The expanding mission of universities requires knowledge and expertise that go beyond traditional academic disciplines. This necessitates professional and management skills that are directly connected to practice.

To cope with the growing scope of higher education, staff members must prepare for professionalization and administrative roles. However, the changing conditions of the universities require staff members to shift their focus from routine work to professionalization. Many staff members remain concerned about their relationships with their colleagues and quality of life. To achieve the full “faculty-staff corporation,” staff must acquire expertise equal to that of faculty members in committee meetings.

The First Transitional Fix: Centers

Along with the professionalization of staff members, universities have established independent centers for admissions, internationalization, student services, IT services, and student counseling. These centers employ academics, but they are different from both traditional faculty and staff. This creates an ambiguous status for center members. Traditional faculty members consider center members to be professional staff, not colleagues; traditional staff consider center members to be non-staff members without a place in the administrative hierarchy; and center members consider themselves to be academics. This ambiguous status puts center members in a state of structural isolation. Therefore, they cannot play the expected professional roles in their centers.

There are other causes of their structural dysfunction. One cause is that they are hired as academics. National universities cannot hire professionals as staff members because staff members must pass civil service exams. Another cause is that newly hired center members are often recent Ph.D. recipients with little knowledge of university operations and management. They also lack experience in student services. Another cause is the management failure. The heads of centers are rotating faculty members who lack expertise in their duties and operations and usually lack the knowledge necessary to run centers.

Some attempts have already been made to address the issues of the centers. One example is the hiring of staff members for the centers. This may be a great opportunity for staff members who want to pursue a professional career. They have established relationships with staff members and have accumulated practical knowledge of services. Since they are not academics, they do not have to worry about publishing or the divide between practice and theory.

The Second Friction Point: The Generalist Breakdown

Before establishing centers, there was an opportunity to professionalize staff members by offering a career path. However, this did not come to fruition because it conflicted with the official requirement of a generalist career path for staff members. This conflicts with professional demand for popularizing universities, but it does not fade away easily. This is partly because, in the traditional administrative hierarchy, generalist management skills are valued more than specialization for promotion. This is based

on the assumption that administrators should be generalists rather than professionals because specialization is too narrow for management. Therefore, the generalist orientation is not only in the minds of staff members, but is also structurally embedded in human resource management policies.

This issue is related to the Japanese preference to homegrown generalists over professionals from outside, their expertise and experience are not as highly valued. The generalist career path is deeply rooted in a membership society, where negotiations and consensus-building are based on human relationships rather than rules, principles, and expertise.

Management Reform: The Squeeze on Faculty

After the 1991 of the University Establishment Law, Japanese universities were somewhat liberated from both governmental control and protection. The increase in institutional independence and responsibility emphasized the roles of administrators.

For a long time, faculty autonomy or resistance has been an obstacle to university reforms. Administrators have been frustrated by the opposition of schools and departments to university reforms. After the 2014 revision of the School Education Act,, faculty meetings gradually began to lose authority over matters outside of academic decisions. Regular faulty members are increasingly excluded from managerial decisions. Research evaluations of faculty members have also become more stringent, causing them to voluntarily turn away from administrative duties.

The Sector Divide

Although the higher education system is highly regulated by the MEXT, there are slight differences between national universities and private universities. National university staff members used to be civil servants. They were characterized by civil service examinations, seniority-based wages, lifetime employment, and MEXT control. Therefore, it was national universities could not hire highly skilled professionals from outside the system by offering incentives and high salaries. Since their corporatization in 2006, national universities have been encouraged to train staff as professionals and depend less on government officers sent by the MEXT. Rather than relying on national civil service exams, national universities can now hire staff based on their needs and preferences. However, salary scales, however, still follow the seniority-based way model of civil servants.

Private universities are not bound by civil service rules or direct government control. They can hire external professionals, provide fast-track administrative opportunities for promising young staff, and to make management decisions without government interference. Mobility between national universities and private universities is still low because the pension systems and retirement bonus are not compatible between these types of institutions.

The New Reality: The Administrator-Dominant Enterprise

After 2006, many university graduates joined the workforce. They are more competent and engaged. Best of all, they have firsthand experiences as students. One significant change for national universities is promoting locally hired staff members. Before 2006, administrators at national universities were mostly sent from the Ministry of Education. Today many administrative positions are open to local hire, and the need to train them as administrators is increasing.

While faculty members are responsible for teaching and research, staff members are responsible for operating universities. The role of staff members is particularly critical in designing university strategy providing excellent services to students due to competition among universities caused by a shrinking young population. Staff members not only work in facility management and student services, but also influence new programs and campuses. Consequently, faculty members are being released from administrative duties. This is a gradual shift of authority from faculty to staff. Since staff members are under the control of the administration, this shift represents administrative dominance.

Therefore, the call for 'faculty-staff cooperation' is the catalyst. Japanese higher education has begun a silent paradigm shift from a faculty-led model to an administrator-led one. For this purpose, Japanese universities are still finding ways to create career paths for administrators among faculty and staff. As demonstrated by American universities, establishing an administrative structure does not ensure effective management and necessitates negotiation between faculty and administrators. Regardless of the management style, the location of authority is always fluid, as demonstrated by the history of shared governance.

Discussion

(1) The End of Faculty Dominance

For a long time, Japanese universities were managed by faculty meetings. However, the popularization of higher education, the rise of student services, and the competition among universities now require expertise and experience beyond generic skills, human connections, and academic capabilities. Since faculty members are under pressure to perform well in research today, they are reluctant to take on administrative duties. Therefore, faculty involvement in university affairs should be reduced and replaced by staff. Compared to their American counterparts, Japanese faculty members have more administrative duties and management authority. While faculty dominance reflects the Confucian hierarchy between intellectuals and manual laborers, changing university conditions do not allow for a traditional sense of hierarchy. The end of faculty dominance requires the professionalization of staff, the division of labor, and the establishment of an administrative structure.

(2) Professionalization of Staff Members

The end of faculty dominance requires the professionalization of staff members. Auxiliary services such as international services, admissions, and student services, require professionals with non-academic expertise and experience based on practice. Current committees and centers still presuppose faculty

dominance and are chaired by faculty members who may not be experts in the field. These organizations should be managed by staff members, while ensuring faculty representation and feedback. The professional knowledge of staff members has the potential to overshadow that of faculty members in committee meetings and centers.

(3) Professionalization of Administrators

Currently administrators are still rotating faculty members. Given the complexity and difficulty of management, an administrative track should be established for faculty members, as is done at American universities. These administrators should be released from teaching and research responsibilities. As presidents increase authority and leadership, administrators will no longer represent faculty members. Since it will take time to develop an administrator market in Japan, there should be a way for vice presidents to return to faculty positions as teaching professors or center directors. It is important that administrators have an academic background, otherwise, teaching and research would be dealt with from solely business and commercial perspectives. In this sense, deans, as faculty representatives rather than administrators, embody the Japanese approach to shared governance and joint authority.

(4) Faculty-Staff Corporation and Shared Governance

As discussed above, faculty-staff cooperation is a unique concept in Japan. While Japanese universities are becoming more professionalized and divided into specialized roles, university constituents still value the generalist qualities of mutual understanding, intimacy, and partnership with colleagues. Therefore, Japanese universities cannot follow the American model, which presupposes a clear division of labor, professionalization, and resource allocation. American universities allocate significant resources to administrators and professionals. Japanese universities can establish career paths and training opportunities for staff members and an administrator track for faculty members. They can also shift more authority from faculty members to staff members, provide non-monetary rewards such as a fast track for professionals and administrators, and to give staff members more authority and discretion. Japanese universities should gradually transition from membership organizations to professional ones without necessarily following the American model.

Conclusion

Most of the issues that Japanese universities are currently facing are not particular to universities; rather, universal to Japanese organizations, which have traditionally been membership-based and generalist. Currently, industries are rapidly introducing merit-based wage systems and diversifying their workforces by recruiting professionals from outside based on rules and regulations. To some extent, universities should follow suit.

However, universities have an educational mission that is not necessarily efficient or predictable from an economic perspective. To this end, management reforms should be conducted according to the characteristics of universities and the resources available. American universities are financially well-off

and have the freedom to invest significant financial resources in professionals and administrators. Since Japanese universities cannot expect such conditions, they need to find ways of training and upgrading existing staff members. Appointing them to committee heads and center members and giving them more authority and discretion in committee meetings are reasonable ways to meet their career aspirations

In these regards, the concept of “faculty-staff cooperation” is quite appropriate. It encompasses the modernization of organizations, including professionalization and division of labor, as well as respecting the membership and generalist preferences of Japanese organizations, which value human relationships, in-house training and a reward system that gives more authority and discretions to those who perform well. Transferring authority from faculty members to staff members establishing administration are indispensable. When universities establish systems that allow staff members to fulfill their potentials, not only will their administrative performance improve, but also the welfare of the university, including faculty members, will also improve.

Declarations

Author Contribution

K. Y. wrote the whole manuscript.

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