Faculty Development in the Balance:
Autonomy vs. Accountability
FD のあり方に関する一考察：自律性と説明責任

Brian J. English

Abstract: With the rise of a new type of university in Japan, there is a need to rethink faculty development to ensure quality education for the students that attend these smaller schools. These new tertiary educational institutions have grown out of the traditional junior college and vocational schools. Hence, they differ greatly from large research universities. Accordingly, the considerations for faculty development need a different approach. This paper will argue that the emergence of these new universities in Japan deems a rethinking of the approach to faculty development initiatives so that they encompass a greater focus on organizational development and accountability while still maintaining a reasonable degree of teacher autonomy.
Keywords: faculty development, autonomy, accountability, Japanese universities, organizational development

要約：日本では新しいタイプの大学が出現しつつあり、これらの小規模の大学に在籍する学生に対して教育の質を保証するためには FD を再考する必要がある。新しいタイプの大学とは、従来の短大や専門学校から発展した高等教育機関であり、大規模な研究機関としての大学とは大いに異なる。したがって、FD に対しても異なるアプローチが必要である。本稿では、このような高等教育機関の出現により、教員の自律性をある程度保持しつつも、組織的発展と説明責任を重視するにより焦点を当てた FD を目指す必要性を論じる。
キーワード：FD、自律性、説明責任、日本の大学、組織的発展

Introduction

In the rather silly genre of "light bulb" jokes, there is one joke that asks the question, "How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?" The punch line is, "Only one, but the light bulb has to be willing to change." Although it is only a joke, the punch line pointedly captures the inherent challenge of behavioral change. Likewise, it may only take one faculty development committee to change a teaching staff, but the teaching staff has to be willing to change.

In any organization, change is inevitable; however, resistance and apathy are typical reactions to suggestions of change in the workplace. Professional development programs in companies and faculty development programs in educational institutions

are essentially agents of change with the responsibility of promoting change to build and strengthen the collective body of employees so that the organization can better meet its goals and accomplish its mission. Educational institutions that afford their teaching staff with considerable decision-making freedom may face greater challenges with organizational development than other businesses that traditionally practice top-down management models. Nevertheless, to be successful, organizational change needs an effective process for professional development, training and succession planning (Mitner, 2009). The notion of entitled autonomy for teachers creates a mindset that inherently reacts adversely to suggestions of change. Although autonomy is a favorable and even positive aspect of the job for teachers, autonomy without accountability can hinder the organizational maturing process for emerging educational programs. Therefore, this paper will argue that the emergence of the "New Junior University" (NJU) in Japan deems a rethinking of the approach to faculty development initiatives so that they encompass a greater focus on organizational development and accountability while still maintaining a reasonable degree of teacher autonomy.

Situational Challenge of NJUs

Despite the declining number of prospective university students in Japan, many two-year colleges and vocational schools are making a transformation and upgrading to four-year universities. Philip Brasor (2012), a Tokyo-based writer, explains that since the government eased regulations for universities in 1991, the number of private universities has grown from 523 to 783. Brasor further provides two simple reasons for why this phenomenon is happening amid such a bleak environment for attracting new students. First is the financial reason that private universities can still attract government funds if they meet certain criteria. Therefore, while the dwindling numbers of prospective students put pressure on two-year institutions, one possibility to avoid bankruptcy is to become a four-year university and reap the benefits of government funding. The second reason Brasor mentions is that the word "university" makes an institution more attractive to prospective students wanting to prepare for entry into the workforce. The word "university" is also appealing to city and prefectural governments because having a local university offers some prestige. Some local governments may even provide additional funding that would enable two-year institutions to make the transition to university because they hope that having a university may curb the migration of local youths to cities like Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka.

As the number of universities increases, the competition for recruiting students becomes a numbers game. Immense pressure on the administrative staff of NJUs to meet student quotas results in a desperation to accept any students that apply (Clark, 2012). Therefore, the academic level of students accepted by NJUs is likely to be lower than that of the students accepted by universities with established reputations. By simply accepting students with low academic ability, NJUs are sending the message to these students that in spite of the challenges, graduation is plausible. By accepting students with low academic ability, any educational institution has an ethical commitment to create an educational environment in which those students can attain a university degree with a reasonable amount of effort. The curriculum, the goals and the expectations should match the potential of the incoming student. Thus, NJUs have an ethical responsibility to create a level playing field for students they have accepted. This point is crucial to the central argument of this paper; that is, the emergence of the NJU requires a rethinking of the balance between teacher autonomy and teacher accountability.

To summarize the current situation of NJUs in Japan, three important conditions exist that differentiate these institutions from traditional four-year universities:

1. The number of four-year institutions has increased exponentially in Japan while the number of high school graduates is shrinking due to demographic trends.
2. Most NJUs are considerably smaller than larger research universities.
3. The academic level of the incoming students may be considerable lower than that of students entering more established universities.

Differences in reputation, organizational size and customer base require different approaches to faculty development. NJUs are not traditional research universities that can vet students and take the cream of the crop. Furthermore, the smaller the educational institution, the greater the need for parallel thinking in program design. The logic here is that the smaller the program, the fewer the choices students have for choosing courses and instructors. In a large university, students have abundant choices for scheduling classes. Options mean that professors can deviate from a strict curriculum without conflicting with the organizational goals of the institution. However, in a smaller university, the more professors deviate from a set agenda, the more disconnected the curriculum becomes. As individual professors try to satisfy their own agendas, program goals can become obscure.

The need for parallel thinking in educational program design is also greater for schools that accept students with low academic ability. These students will probably require special attention in the form of scaffolding the curriculum and establishing academic support systems such as study centers with tutors. Since students with lower academic ability may be less versatile than high achievers with a high-level of academic independence, it is necessary to explicitly state program goals and expectations. Material among courses needs to be carefully integrated to maximize learning through reinforcement of core concepts and retention.

Parallel thinking in program design does not have to translate into a loss of autonomy. Rather it implies a greater need for transparency and accountability. Autonomy and accountability are not contradictory terms. Accountability, however, should carry a heavier emphasis for both the educational organization as a business and the instructors as individuals working within that organization. An educational organization needs to be accountable for the quality control of the product they are selling to the prospective student. By admitting a student to the university, the organization is entering into an agreement to educate those students and award them with the appropriate university degree provided the students accomplish a reasonable list of goals. To honor that agreement, the organization as a whole should be accountable for matching the curriculum to the evaluation criteria that students pass at the time of admissions. Otherwise, the university is simply admitting students for financial gain and may be developing courses and curriculum that will be impossible for some students to pass. The individual instructor is also accountable because the quality of the education is largely a product of the quality of instruction.

Approaches to Faculty Development

A three-dimensional approach to faculty development as described by Toombs (1975) has been the basic model for faculty development at universities in the United States and worldwide. This model proposes that faculty development should encompass the professional dimension that embodies the university professor as a researcher, the professor as an instructor and the professor as a contributor to the organizational development as a committee member in the decision-making process. This model weights research activities as an essential aspect of faculty development that adds to the prestige of the university by building the careers of the tenured or tenure-track professors. This emphasis on the professional dimension lessens the attention that

faculty development places on instructional guidance and organizational development. Parsons and Platt (as cited in Toombs, 1975) refer to this as "institutionalized individualism." Although this may be an attractive aspect of the research university, it may not be so suitable for the emerging NJUs in Japan.

Minter, (2009) offers two other models for approaches to faculty development. These are at separated ends of a continuum with combinations of each existing toward the middle of the continuum. On one end is the Organizational-Centered Process Model (OCP Model). The OCP model maintains a centralized approach to faculty development that includes a well-managed staff that is amply funded. The staff are commissioned to identify the faculty needs, establish programs to meet those needs and implement a variety of professional development activities around campus.

On the other end of Minter's continuum is the Ego-Centered Model. This approach is very decentralized and unstructured. It assumes a high degree of autonomy, but renders a situation in which communication of organizational goals can become ambiguous. Thus, the Ego-Centered model could result in disconnects of information, goals and processes.

In smaller educational institutions, faculty development activities should be closely tied to institutional goals (Tierney, Ahern, & Kidwell, as cited in Murray, 2002). Therefore, a faculty development initiative that is on the side of the OPC Model of the continuum may be better suited for NJUs. However, it is unlikely that an NJU with a small faculty and limited resources would be able to implement a program with a well-managed staff. Therefore, the approach could be adapted to the available resources while maintaining a focus on organizational development as defined by Gillespie:

> Organizational development efforts seek to help the organization function in an effective and efficient way so as to support the work of faculty members, administrators, students and staff members. Leadership training for department chairpersons; effective use of group processes; review and revision of the institution's mission statement; implementing organizational change processes; and institutional governance are representative topics that fall within the purview of organizational development (2010, p.381).

A faculty development initiative that focuses on the growth of the organization as a whole may be a suitable approach for NJUs.

Faculty Autonomy at NJUs

Whether it is an inherent trait or learned through years of classroom management, teachers often develop a strong affinity for autonomy in the workplace. Autonomy can open the doors for creative independence and have positive motivational effects on the individual teacher. Autonomy is an attractive, and even necessary, job condition for teachers. This may be especially true for many instructors at NJUs. Since new universities have to recruit new faculty with post-graduate degrees in a variety of fields to maintain the status of university, it is likely that many of those recruits are either recent graduates hoping to build their careers and eventually move to universities that are more reputable. These instructors desire autonomy to continue the research they may have started in graduate school or while doing fellowships. They are aware of the pressure to publish to advance their careers. For these career builders, autonomy in both research and course design is key for their own personal career development.

Another large group of instructors at NJUs that benefit from a considerable amount of autonomy is the part-time faculty. Many of the part-time faculty may actually be fulltime part-timers. That is, although they may only be teaching one or two days a week at the NJU, they have several other teaching commitments to juggle. These teachers often try to maximize their teaching loads for obvious financial reasons. However, the more courses they teach at a variety of locations the less committed they are to any one particular organization. Furthermore, it is only natural that part-timers with heavy teaching loads will want to minimize course preparation. Therefore, it may be an easier choice to use classroom time doing what they know from having done it before than to try to adapt to using new materials and teaching techniques. The fact that the part-time instructors spend less time on the NJU campus also hinders possibilities for interaction and collaboration with other faculty members. This creates challenges for shifting the focus of faculty development from the individual to the organization.

A third group of faculty members that is concerned with the degree of autonomy at NJUs is made up of those instructors that had been faculty and decision-makers at the junior college or vocational school prior to the restructuring of the institution into a four-year university. This group may have years of their careers invested in the institution. They could be very accustomed to established procedures and regulations that had existed prior to restructuring. Having been at the NJU "from the beginning", this group of faculty are likely to have an obvious commitment to the development of

the organization and be central in the decision-making process that guides the direction of organizational development.

For university instructors, autonomy in teaching, curriculum development and research may create a motivating environment with much freedom to choose one's own direction. However, too much autonomy may lead to a disconnect between a teacher's individual goals and those of the educational institution. Most primary and secondary educational institutions avoid this disconnect by limiting teacher autonomy through strict use of textbooks and monitoring of educational outcomes using formalized testing techniques. At the tertiary level of education, the degree of autonomy may depend on the type of institution. The more specialized the curriculum the less independence an instructor has in the decision-making process. For example, a business school is likely to place stricter guidelines on what textbooks and materials the instructors can use than a liberal arts college. Likewise, the larger a university program is, the greater the likelihood for diversity among materials and teaching practices. Such diversity creates choices for students when they are scheduling classes.

NJUs with student enrollment under two thousand students will likely have limited course offerings. This combined with the fact that the institution may be accepting very low academic achievers shifts the focus of professional development programs. The ethical responsibility of the educational organization to create an equitable environment to graduate the students they accept calls for an emphasis on accountability rather than autonomy. Since NJUs are not research universities, faculty research should not be a priority for the faculty. The focus on faculty development should be more of the Organizational-Centered Process Model than the Ego-Centered Model.

Organized Anarchies

Toombs (1975, p.706) raised the question, "To what degree is a faculty member the employee of a corporate entity and to what extent is he an independent professional practicing within an organization?" Although Toombs offers several perspectives from history of how the responsibilities of professors have changed, he also concedes that the answer to the question will determine the direction of a faculty development program. Toombs adds, "The development of an employee under a sponsored scheme can be justified only insofar as it advances the goals of the organization (p. 706)."

Despite the merits of faculty autonomy, the affordance of unlimited autonomy may result in a disconnect of information, a disconnect of goals and a disconnect of process

between and among stakeholders in an educational organization. This can create a situation dubbed "organized anarchy" which according to Cohen, March and Olsen (1972, p.1) are organizations "characterized by problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participation."

In reaction to what they describe as universities operating as organized anarchies, Cohen, March and Olsen devised the Garbage Can Model of organizational choice (1972). The theory is not a model that organizations should try to follow, but rather a model that explains what many organizations become due to lack of proper organizational development. The decision-makers in an organization come up with solutions that are figuratively thrown into a garbage can and then when a problem arises a solution is picked out of the garbage and applied as a solution to the problem. If the solution does not work, another is chosen. Therefore, the problem-solving process becomes trial and error. The theory assumes that most problems lack a single perfect solution. Decisions are often made independent of what the problems and what the solutions actually are. This is primarily because in organized anarchies actions are not linked clearly to goals. In fact, due to disconnects in information there are probably conflicting goals and ambiguity in the perception of organizational goals and processes.

The premise of this paper is that the over-allowance of faculty autonomy without a balance of accountability puts NJUs at risk for becoming organized anarchies. High-autonomy and low-accountability can create a situation in which the participation of the stakeholders is overly fluid. That is, there is uneven participation. The amount of time, effort and commitment among faculty members will vary greatly leading to further disconnects within the organization. Fluidity, in another sense, is an inherent challenge for NJUs because two types of instructors – the young career builders and the part-timers – are likely to move on to other institutions. If these instructors move on without having shared and recorded their curriculum building efforts with the faculty as a whole, those ideas and materials are lost. This common phenomenon impedes the organizational memory of an educational institution and creates a situation that could be called Organizational Alzheimer's.

Policy Recommendations

As educational organizations in a transformation process, NJUs need some type of faculty development program. According to former university president, Gregory Clark (2012), many of these new universities make only minimal efforts to improve the

quality of teaching. Therefore, there is a need for more accountability. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to offer definitive answers on how to design the best faculty development program at an NJU, several practicable suggestions may offer some guidance to finding a balance between autonomy and accountability.

One of the primary goals for establishing a faculty development program at smaller tertiary educational institutions is to rejuvenate enthusiasm for teaching among middle and late career faculty. In institutions that have limited elective courses, the monotony of teaching the same courses without introducing new teaching techniques can lead to intellectual and psychological stagnation (Murray, 2002).

With faculty development initiatives that focus on organizational development, one centralized approach is to require instructors to "submit annual scholarship and developmental plans that are related to annual performance reviews. Plans submitted should identify what department and institutional strategic goals are being supported by each faculty member's development plan" (Mitner, 2009: p.69). In accordance with this recommendation, Mitner (2009) also suggests that all professors have a performance review and the institution should use the outcomes of the review to identify future development needs. This could be part of an annual training and development needs assessment.

As NJUs progress through the transformation to four-year universities they are likely to attract a group of academically low achieving students. Therefore, curricula reforms will be necessary. Faculty development initiatives should be part of the organizational development process to reform curricula that will better meet the specific needs of these students so that they can be successful in their studies (Murray, 2002).

As previously mentioned, due to the time and scheduling restraints of part-time faculty, a faculty development program may need to make specific considerations. Tarr (2010) explains that faculty development programs may be most effective if the institution has a systematic and comprehensive approach. An example of this approach would be a formalized, structured and goal-direct program that nurtures a connection between and among key stakeholders. Since the part-time faculty are key stakeholders in the success of an NJU, it follows that building communication lines that promote two-way transparency and parallel thinking are essential to avoiding disconnects that can impede organizational development.

There are surely many other policy recommendations that would be appropriate for NJUs that are implementing faculty development initiatives. A general recommendation is to focus on organizational development and eliminate any

possibility for ambiguity in communicating the organizational goals for program development and curriculum enhancement.

Conclusions

With the rise of a new type of university in Japan, there is a need to rethink faculty development to ensure quality education for the students that attend these smaller schools. These new tertiary educational institutions have grown out of the traditional junior college and vocational schools. Since they differ greatly from larger universities, the considerations for organizational development need a different approach. The approach should value transparency and accountability while including elements of parallel thinking during the program planning process. However, faculty development programs should work to maintain a suitable balance of team-based organization development and individual teacher autonomy. Well-planned programs with clearly articulated goals and established connections among all stakeholders may facilitate this process.

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