

An Overview of Higher Education Management

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Abstract

This paper ascertains that a university, or place of higher education, is an organization. Recognizing this and taking steps to professionalize higher education management practices will impact the modernization and professionalization of higher education organizations. This short, introductory review begins by briefly defining educational management, focusing on four current trends in education management research: *product management, quality management, knowledge management and human resource management*. It briefly explains the context of Japanese higher education before presenting recommendations for the professionalization of Japanese higher education management that are based on these trends and prior case-study research on Japanese higher education. The sustainability of higher education is deemed proportionate to the professionalization of higher education management and as such, this paper calls for more recognition and research into this field, particularly in a Japanese context.

1. Introduction

A university is an organization – a place where we create and disseminate knowledge – it has an organizational focus and organizational units.

Conceptualizing a university in this way - acknowledging the 'organizational turn' in education - makes it necessary to recognize that these organizations have typical organizational problems that require organizational solutions; meaning we need to look to research and fields outside education to apply appropriate solutions (Krucken and Meier, 2006). Krucken & Meier (2006) argue for turning the university into an 'organizational actor' (243) to successfully navigate the era of globalization. In using this term they 'try to evoke the image of an integrated, goal-oriented entity that is deliberately choosing its own actions and that can be held responsible for what it does' (243). This, as they ascertain, is inevitably linked to leadership and management of the organization, and recognizes the need to apply ideas drawn from business and public administration to this context. An organization itself is an attempt by humans to collectively impose meaning on a fluid, complex and 'tangled' world (Hernes, 2008:1). We can look at organizations through different 'frames' (Bolman and Deal, 1984): structural frame, human resource frame, political frame and the symbolic frame and these help us to better understand the complexity of the organization.

The university as an organization can be centralized or decentralized; top or bottom heavy; can have differing degrees of autonomy; can experience funding pressures; can experience pressures from the changing environment; can be public or private; can following traditional or distance practices and can be impacted upon by international, regional, and national tensions. The university as organization can also experience changes and demands in government steering policies such as self-regulation and an increased demand for accountability (as in the United Kingdom); can observe a shift from central planning to self-regulation (as seen in Sweden); can experience difficulties associated with self-regulation (as seen in Rus-

sia) and can experience decentralized planning (as seen in Japan). These different approaches mean that there is a need for different management strategies; a need for better understanding and professionalizing higher educational management. By examining the concept of university as organization and through exploring global trends in educational management, this introductory paper provides recommendations for the professionalization of higher education management in Japan. The professionalization of HE management will lead to greater sustainability of reforms and will promote greater cooperation between stakeholders. This paper acknowledges that education management is an applied discipline, which still suffers from issues of diversity (Ozga, 1993; Bush, 2010) and conceptual understanding, particularly in Japan. Continuing to research higher education management in a Japanese context will hopefully lead to action-based theories of educational management that can help universities prosper.

2. Defining Educational Management

There have been four main indicators of the increased professionalization of education management, first, the emergence of specialized journals on higher education management. These include titles such as, the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *Tertiary Education and Management*, *Higher Education Management and Policy*, or *Planning for Higher Education*. Likewise, is the increase in international conferences based solely on the dissemination of education management research (such as the Australian *Tertiary Education Management Conference*). Third, is the increased recognition that academic management associations are giving to education management researchers, allowing them to be validated and respected as management academics and professionals in their own right (such as the *Japan Association of Management*). The final indicator is the establishment of

academic programs and courses on higher education management (such as the *Department of Management, University of Bath, Institute of Education London, UK and Tsukuba University, Tohoku University, Nagoya University, Meiji University, Japan*). Yet, how can we accurately define education management?

Due to its interdisciplinary nature there is 'no single generally accepted definition' (Bush, 2010: 1). Bush (2010) has 'consistently argued' that education management be concerned with the 'purpose and aims of education' and that it is a 'field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organizations' (p.1). Bush (2010) explains how Bolam (1999:194 in Bush, 2010: 1) differentiates *management* from educational *leadership* which has 'at its core the responsibility for policy formulation and, where appropriate, organizational transformation' (1999:194 in Bush, 2010:1). Both definitions point to the importance of aligning purpose and aims: the need to reach organizational objectives. These objectives are often communicated in the form the university mission statement. The mission statement is based on 'generally available concepts in organizational management ('management by objectives'), which aim at strengthening the link between the organization and its individual members in a way that goes far beyond traditions of professional and/or state control in higher education' (Krucken and Meier, 2006:249). There is, therefore, a need for members of the organization to be aware of the field of educational management, particularly those in middle and senior management positions, in order to participate fully in the organization.

Some researchers turn to models of educational management to categorize and help actors within the organization better understand the practice of managing education. Yet, at times it is argued that there is a 'gap' (Bush, 2010:24) between theory and practice: that academics define and

refine theory while managers engage in practice (24). This is why there is an emergence in research practitioners and there is now much model borrowing from disciplines outside education. Bush (2010) presents six models of educational management: formal – that assumes that the organization is a hierarchical system and it treats the organization as a system (it follows the official structure, the authority of leaders is important with emphasis on accountability) (p.40); collegial – that assumes that organizations determine the policy and make decisions through consensus (in this model power is shared) (p.72); political – that assumes that decisions emerge through negotiation and bargaining, (conflict is natural in this context) (p.99); subjective – that assumes that organizations are the creation of people within them, holding different meanings to different people (in this model the organizational structure emerges from the discussions) (p.126); ambiguity – that assumes that turbulence and unpredictability are dominant features of the organization, there is no clarity in the objectives of institutions and their processes are not properly understood (p.147) and finally; cultural – that assumes that beliefs, values, and ideology are at the heart of the organization. Norms become shared traditions, which are communicated within the group (p.170). These six models of education management are useful as a starting point and can provide a framework for understanding the scope of education management.

After establishing the background of the field, it is paramount to clarify *who* manages education. Higher education managers are those concerned with facilitation, innovation and enforcement of missions within the institution. They answer questions of what the organization needs, why it needs it, when it needs it, how it needs and with what resources: they are middle level and senior level managers. They help apply and explain the organization's missions, balance risk and expectations and add the human

dimension to facilitating useful outcomes for the organization.

2.1. Trends in educational management

Reviewing the literature, there are four main research trends in educational management: *Product Management, Quality Management, Knowledge Management and Human Resource Management*.

2.1.1. Product Management

First, due to the discourse of 'student as consumer,' there is a renewed focus on *product management* (Shumar, 2010), which is closely being followed by the concept of 'student as producer' (Neary & Winn, 2009). It is useful to frame higher education management in terms of products (outputs) that need to be managed by the organization. In some contexts, the outputs can form a tangible way of assessing organizational performance, often categorized in terms of financial performance, product market performance and shareholder return (Richard, et.al. 2009). Yet there is debate as to what constitutes a meaningful key performance indicator or product in higher education and how they are measured. In higher education management, the obvious products are the academic qualifications awarded to students (BA, MA, Doctorates and other higher professional qualifications), research output, consulting services, and community outreach schemes (including widening participation indicators). It is clear to see that the product of higher education is the sum of many parts. In the traditional sense, the basis of a university education was education for education's sake; being educated to degree-level would give you a traditional intellect that would open your mind to the world. A focus on vocational, transferrable skills was secondary. In the 21st century, we can see a shift to career preparation and a focus on not only academic intellect but also

soft skills and other transferable skills. The rise of the Internet and associated technologies has helped to further define what the 'product' of higher education is and how it should be managed. The metaphor of the student (or parent) as consumer represents an increasing dependency on valuing and assessing the 'product' that one buys. Subsequently, there is a tension between the traditional values of education and the traditional higher education product and measurable outcomes; as mentioned above, mission statements are communicated on websites and 'advertising' the product that the university can provide. This relies on implicit responsibility, transparency, trust and foresight - it is the cause of tension between two market forces- outcomes and immediacy (McKain, 2010).

Yet, how can the organization deal with an increasingly competitive environment? How can they manage their products effectively? One method is to improve brand awareness and distinction: to excel in reputation management. Distinction is one way for a higher education organization to succeed in the global marketplace. Higher education organizations need to find a product that meets the demands of the current global climate but at the same time can be a distinguished brand. This is proving increasingly difficult for smaller, newer, private universities.

Product management is thus, the ability to see how the products created by the organization either enhance or threaten potential outcomes deemed essential for success and how they can achieve long-term recognition for the organization.

Table One provides a summary of measures or products that higher education organizations track to assess their performance (Thomson Reuters, 2010). These are often referred to as key performance indicators (KPI).

Table One - Measures to track performance

Measure	Percentage
Grant funding	41%
Faculty salary	36%
Research expenditure	35%
Rankings	23%
Patents	18%
Research outputs	18%
Graduation rates	14%
Private gifts	14%
Enrollment growth	9%
Faculty reputation	9%

Source: Thomson Reuters, 2010

By framing education management in this way, it could be argued that most indicators fail to recognize and value the contribution that a higher education organization makes towards a sustainable economy, society and global environment. However, KPI frameworks still allow the organization to define and evaluate how successful it is at meeting its own goals. It is the need to understand the complex interweaving of products, KPIs and reputation that is key to higher education product management today.

2.1.2. Quality Management

Second, *quality management* is a research growth area. The changing idea of higher education; changes in funding, changing student profiles, growing interest from the state and associated demands for increased accountability have lead to the establishment of quality assurance agencies and a growth in research on quality management. Quality is particularly problematic to conceptualize and define in higher education. Quality can be 'multi-faceted' as Frazer (1992) defined, and 'slippery and value-laden' (Harvey and Green, 1993). Scott (1994) goes as far as to suggest that

there is no authoritative definition of quality in higher education organizations.

A further review of the literature (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey, 2006) shows that we can view quality from a variety of perspectives; as a mechanism, as a form of excellence, as perfection, as a decision as to whether or not something is fit for purpose, as value for money, or as transformation. There are three main mechanisms for measuring quality in HE institutions: assessment, audit and accreditation. Assessment is seen as a quantitative evaluation (Woodhouse, 1999). Audits focus on the processes that are implemented by HE institutions to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Dill, 2000). Accreditation is the method most utilized around the world. With many country models based on the United States accreditation models (Eaton, 2004). Essentially, the process of accreditation is a yes/no decision (Woodhouse, 1999). Quality as a form of excellence is associated with standards. It has various connotations and can be related to such ideas as benchmarking, league tables, etc (Harvey and Green, 1993; Harvey, 2006). The assurance is done through an external evaluation, such as an accreditation. If we look at quality as fitness for purpose, educational management asks if the university is fulfilling its mission. Finally, quality as transformation (Harvey and Knight, 1995) is when quality can develop or empower students through the learning process and when institutions can change to do better research or have wider access. An understanding of these different dimensions and definitions of quality management are essential for higher education managers at all levels.

2.1.3. Knowledge Management

Third, the field of *knowledge management* (KM) continues to capture

attention in higher education management (Metcalf, 2006). Metcalfe's (2006) comprehensive critical analysis of KM is not only useful for managers in higher education, but also for professionals who work in other 'highly institutionalized and information-intensive' fields (p.vii). Knowledge Management is defined as 'the systematic and organized approach of organizations to manipulate and take advantage of both explicit and tacit knowledge, which in turn leads to the creation of new knowledge (Serban and Luan, 2002:8). In her work, Metcalfe argues that KM is related to the connection between the increase in managerialism in higher education with the promise of profit making in the new knowledge economy (p.1). The increase in knowledge-based decisions on campus and the utilization of data, information, knowledge and action cycles can result in education organizations being more successfully managed. Santos (2010) accurately points out that one of the 'greatest ironies' is, that in higher education, 'whose core business is to create, transform and transmit knowledge' (p.96), universities lack organized KM systems.

2.1.4. Human Resource Management

The fourth trend in higher education management research is a renewed interest in *human resource management* (HRM) practices (Brewer & Brewer, 2010; EACA, 2012; Homes & McElwee, 1995; Dent & Whitehead, 2013). There are two strands of staff in higher education: academic and administrative. Yet, in some countries and higher education settings, the line is blurred between these two groups. This undoubtedly leads to management problems and more fundamentally, identity issues. Research consistently shows that academics are highly motivated but underpaid. Recruitment processes often have a lack of transparency, high frequency of internal recruitment, nepotism and restrictive frameworks (EACA, 2012).

Second, there are issues with career development and training: a lack of progression, poor evaluation procedures and limited incentives for professional development and training (EACA, 2012). Third, working conditions for academics are often poor with limited time available to conduct research, lack of autonomy and a need for academics to take up additional positions to satisfy academic and financial needs (EACA, 2012).

Research on trends among administrative staff found that they feel satisfied but undervalued (EACA, 2012). In some contexts, there is a lack of control on recruitment procedures by national authorities and a lack of emphasis on skills. Contract duration is becoming shorter and positions more unstable, yet they are often in line with similar positions in the private sector. Additionally, there are more complex issues at play when academic staff must work alongside professional administrative staff. An area of particular tension is identity.

Professional identity characterizes the person's importance for his/her profession and professional activity (Druzilov, 2003) while professional activity (Povarenkov, 2002) is connected to professional identity, professional experience and professional productivity. When academics are asked to engage in administrative 'political' work, connected to educational management, it can be at odds with their professional identity and activity. Academics in administrative positions ask 'who should I be' and 'what should I be like' (Berns, 1982) at different stages of their managerial work. Freedom and autonomy are intrinsic values for academics (Altbach, 2000; Middlehurst, 1993); yet, these are often compromised through routine management work.

Academics identities are constructed around particular parts of one's job; examining different circumstances through differing identities leads to a negotiation of identity (Krilov, 2004). Research shows that identity and

loyalty of academics lies first within their own departments (Waring, 2007) and then, within their own field (Clegg, 2003; Coaldrake and Steadman, 1999).

Specifically, in Asia, jobs in higher education are often seen as unattractive (EACA, 2012). Problem areas include low salaries, high contact hours, multiple administration tasks and poor promotion procedures. There is also a lack of PhDs among teaching staff in comparison to other global regions (EACA, 2012) and a need to improve language and IT skills among academic faculty.

Looking at these four trends, and by framing educational management through models, the next step is to consider *how* to professionalize education management, specifically in Japan.

3. Context of Japanese Higher Education

A substantial amount of literature on Japanese higher education management and governance has focused on the declining birthrate and aging population (Amano, 1994, 1996, 1999; Aoki 2005; Eades, 2006). This decline is leading to much upheaval in the higher education sector and macro-level problems such as the commodification of higher education, *kisei kanwa* (deregulation), *tayooka* (diversification) and *koseika* (individualization). Kinmonth (2005) stated that higher education managers need to respond much more rapidly to such changes and that organizations should find 'consumers' (Albanese, 1999) in new markets. This has exacerbated the shift from 'institution' to 'industry' and the need for 'market terminology' (Fairclough, 1995) and other 'production and business metaphors in higher education (Naidoo & Jamison, 2002).

There is an urgent need for Japanese higher education organizations to 'do something' and thus education managers are looking to empirical re-

search and the field of higher education management to present them with models and theories that can be applied to their organization. Yet, there is increasing unrest among some educational managers who see their mission as vocational not administrative. Despite the differing views of utilizing private management practices in higher education organizations institutions in other parts of the world (Deem, 2001; Goldspink, 2007; Teichler, 2003) Japanese private universities are taking steps to follow Teichler's (2003) 'managerial values' in the pursuit of success and survival. Yet, there is still a need to raise awareness of the principles of educational management to further professionalize Japan organizations. The following recommendations emerged from the literature and reflections on various ethnographic and qualitative-based studies conducted by the author over the past nine years.

4. Key Recommendations for professionalizing higher education management in Japan

Based on current trends in higher education management, and research on the Japanese context, the following section will outline four pertinent recommendations for professionalizing the educational management of Japanese higher education organizations.

The four recommendations are that Japanese higher education management needs:

- ✓ To re-examine the concept of product and product management;
- ✓ To re-examine the concept of quality;
- ✓ To develop more efficient knowledge management practices;
- ✓ To improve HRM practices.

4.1. Re-examine the concept of product

As was discussed in the previous section, the question is how can higher education managers provide and maintain a product that meets the demands of the era while at the same time establishing a distinctive brand? A greater understanding of the basics of education management theories is necessary; meaning managers should be focusing on their own organization and their products before looking outside.

This paper argues that too much attention in Japan is focused on global rankings as KPIs and products of the university, distracting attention away from the more important 'products' of higher education (Altbach, 2006; Altbach & Balan, 2007). In reality, product management in Japanese higher education needs to be redefined and refocused on more tangible, domestic KPIs, particularly from a research perspective and an academic perspective. From the academic perspective, higher education management in Japan should look towards attracting and retaining outstanding faculty and staff (such as by improving faculty salary and benefit conditions, assessing employee satisfaction and examining staff turnover rate) and providing quality academic programs and support services (such as examining academic support spending and instructional spending per student). From a research perspective, attention should be placed on increasing faculty scholarly activities, particularly the number of publications in international outlets and membership and participation in national academic associations. More consideration should also be given to 'local' products, the goods and services received by students, the curriculum, and the content of their educational programs. Japan should borrow case examples from the new 'student as producer' turn (Neary & Winn, 2009) which re-engineers the relationship between teaching and research, where students are part of creating the product rather than just consumers of

knowledge.

4.2. Re-examine the concept of quality management

Research has shown that initially, managers need to redefine what quality is to them, their staff and the organization as a whole; there is a necessity for a whole-organization approach. There is a need to reaffirm the value that total quality management can add to an academic organization. Managing quality should not be seen as a burden and an additional heavy workload staff must endure. Organizations must provide the right tools for their employees to provide quality and should hire the right people to carry out the duties. Universities need better quality control procedures, to minimize waste and heightened quality cost awareness. Quality management should be transparent and free from bias. It should be ensured that internal tasks relating to the management of quality are not overly influenced by politics and hierarchal relationships within the organization (Birchley, 2013). The organization should be able to clearly articulate the philosophy and approach to quality management within the organization and finally, the quality management systems implemented in the organization should also seek to examine levels of trust within the organization (Birchley, 2013). Improved quality management is in direct connection with more efficient knowledge management practices and knowledge exploitation, using a knowledge basis to improve processes.

4.3. Develop more efficient knowledge management practices

Brewer and Brewer's (2010) work on HRM and KM provides a useful starting point for improving KM in Japanese higher education management. They see that by linking HRM and KM an institution can attain a competitive advantage. As they ascertain, the interface between what or-

ganizations need and what they can provide may 'best be illustrated by the knowledge targets of both' (p. 334) and that 'by focusing on the knowledge dimensions of factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge as measured by the process dimensions from remembering, understanding, applying, evaluating, and creating' a higher education organization can provide 'a tangible means for measuring assurance of learning in the students they produce' (p.334).

Japanese higher education management would also do well to utilize case study research highlighted in Metcalfe's work (2010) as a framework for better developing KM practices within institutions. Case examples should be taken from research by Cranfield and Taylor (2008) and their utilization of Stankosky's (2005) KM pillars (enterprise learning, leadership, organization, technology and learning) as a lens for better understanding and applying KM in education organizations. As Ponzi (2002) postulates, 'KM is in the process of establishing itself as a new aspect of management and slowly but surely it is capturing the attention of the HEIs' (Ponzi, 2002 in Cranfield Taylor, 2010:99). Japanese higher education managers need to push for reforms and new policy that recognize the importance of KM.

The case study by Smith, Lewis and Massey (2006) provides excellent examples of policy processes for technological change, while Borcher (2006) and Wang & Paper's (2006) cases detail the complex steps taken to integrate technology for better knowledge management systems. These can be templates for policy borrowing and comparative educational management. Universities in Japan that can take an active KM approach, in collaboration with their existing institutional research (IR), will surely be the success stories of the future as they will be able to leverage their new found critical engagement with and knowledge of the organization, its poli-

cies and practices.

4.4. Improve human resource management practices

There are three ways that Japan can improve human resource management practices in terms of higher education management. First, higher education managers at all levels (department heads and senior management members) should seek to obtain professional qualification in higher education management. The number of universities around the world now offering professional qualifications in higher education management qualifications is growing exponentially. Yet, growth in Japan is slow.

It is necessary for Japanese universities to develop qualifications such as MBA and DBAs in Education Leadership and Management and diploma/certificate programs for new hires and those transitioning into higher education from the private sector. Universities such as the *University of Bath* and their Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Higher Education Management, the *University of London Institute of Education* MBA and *Stanford University* MBA should be used as examples as such innovative research degrees are designed to enhance and develop professional practice.

Second, hiring practices, particularly for administrative positions, need to follow global, performance-based human resource management practices where university administrators are hired based on their area of specialization and are hired as specialists not generalists. In Europe, Australasia and North America, the majority of university governance staff are considered specialists in their field. They receive training in educational management for their area of specialization and often receive funding from associated academic bodies for professional development throughout their career. In Japan, there is a lack of specialists in vital administrative management roles and increasing pressure is put on academics to be manag-

ers and administrators, while continuing to hold large teaching loads.

Third, there needs to be an increase in the number of female higher education managers. Not only do these female education managers need to professionalize, but they also need to contribute the female manager voice to the discourse of educational management research. As was mentioned above, the normative view is that management is a male pursuit in Japan resulting in an educational management theory has 'failed to recognize different values of women' (Ozga, 1993). More female higher education managers in Japan will also support the Japanese government's specific initiatives towards parity in the workplace.

5. Conclusion

Higher education today is faced with somewhat of a deteriorating industry structure that needs to be addressed; this can be done through a better understanding of educational management and clearer recognition of the university as an organization. The field of higher educational management must be better researched outside North America and Europe and a stronger Asian voice in particular, should be present, representing the region on the global stage. As universities are faced with changing external conditions the organization must examine how they can embrace the new opportunities and new operating conditions. It is a necessity to become a corporate university (Barnett, 2011). Universities and their managers must decide themselves what they want to be and how they want to operate in the future. The university as an organization should adopt twenty-first century business models to improve quality, their products, their people, and their conception of knowledge to survive. There needs to be a culture of innovation, of creativity, and measurable goals and objectives. Organizations should clearly articulate their vision, mission and

values, promote, empathize and value the people within the organization and should be aligned with the wider community in which they function to ensure there is a common purpose for the organizational mission. Specifically in Japan, more educational managers (both senior and middle managers) need to take an organization approach; focusing resources on the better management of products, people, quality and knowledge. In conclusion, a university and its management's ability to compete and self-direct in ways that can give them a competitive advantage in the marketplace would benefit from knowledge of professional higher education management practices. An interdisciplinary research approach that draws knowledge and expertise from the field of modern management to the field of education is an absolute necessity for the professionalization of Japanese higher education management.

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