

University Reform for Gender Equality in Japan

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze trends in university reforms for gender equality in Japan. Firstly, I will begin by classifying university-based organizations for gender equality into three types. Secondly, I will outline the national strategy on gender equality. Thirdly, I will examine the case of Tohoku University's gender equality programs in light of the proposed typology, and as it relates to the current government strategy on gender equality.

This paper will investigate the following three research questions with regard to universities in Japan: 1) What are the key organizations for gender equality? 2) How does the policy environment influence gender equality? 3) How do organizations for gender equality work?

I have utilized the work of Willinger (2002) in developing this study to use the typology of university women's centers. Here, Willinger provides a starting point by classifying two types of "women's centers" on university campuses in the USA: "women's resource centers" and "women's research centers". She created this model based largely upon three different features: mission, services and stakeholders (Willinger 2002 : 48-49, 505-506). I took up her challenge to

develop another typology of organizations for gender equality that is focused specifically upon the case of Japan. This paper classifies university organizations for gender equality into three types: (1) education and research centers, (2) gender empowerment centers , and (3) steering committees for gender equality and/or gender equality offices. Type 1 and Type 2 correspond quite closely to Willinger's women's research centers and women's resource centers.

In this typology, I will examine the case of Tohoku University's gender equality programs as they relate to the current government policy environment. Tohoku University was founded in 1907 as the third "*imperial*" university, and is also known as the first university in Japan to admit female students. In 1913, three women were admitted to the School of Science in spite of objections from the Ministry of Education. Tohoku University has since become one of the largest universities in Japan, with 10 undergraduate schools, 15 graduate schools, five research institutes and three specialized graduate schools.

2. Organizations for Gender Equality within Universities

Table 1 is my classification of gender equality organizations located in universities in Japan. Types 1 and 2 are quite similar to Willinger's work. Type 3 , committees/offices for gender equality, have recently been introduced to certain universities in Japan (specifically, Nagoya University and Tohoku University).

The mission of the Type 3 organizations consists of management to promote policy development and evaluate gender equality. Constituents include all members of the university, as well as prospective students and staff. The work and programs of these organizations are policy-oriented, and they establish links both inside and outside of the university. One of the important

tasks of the committees/offices for gender equality consists of organizing gender-based statistics and analysis with regard to the overall activities of the university.

The functions of the committees/offices for gender equality are also similar to those of organizations in North America that are working toward equality, human rights and harassment prevention. The word “ diversity” has recently become an increasingly popular concept through which to incorporate such concepts, and there exists a vast array of names and organizational structures in this regard. For example, in the United States there is the *Chancellor’s Advisory Group on Diversity* at the University of California, and the *Equal Opportunity Office* at the University of Virginia. In Canada, there is the *Committee of the Status of Women* at the University of Toronto, and the *Equity Office* at the University of British Columbia.

Table 1: Organizations for Gender Equality at Universities in Japan

	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3
	Gender Research Center	Gender Empowerment Center	Committee for Gender Equality/ Office of Gender Equality
Mission	Scholarship (produce / promote knowledge related to gender)	Service (provide activities to empower women and gender minorities)	Management (promote policy development/ evaluate gender equality)
Constituents	Students, faculty, scholars and professionals	Students, staff, women in the community, special interest groups	All members of the university, prospective students and staff
Programs	Academic (advance	Issue-oriented (feature	Policy-oriented

	understanding; enhance research and teaching)	women of achievement, gender minorities)	(establish linkages inside and outside the university)
Instruction	Formalized courses, academic programs	Noncredit courses (emphasizing self-help)	Organize gender-sensitivity trainings for faculty and staff
Counseling	Academic advising, referrals	Individual and/or group counseling (sexual harassment, health, domestic violence, sexual orientation, career planning, etc.)	Advise the President and other senior administrators on gender issues
Research	Conduct academic research projects on gender issues	Survey of Center Users	Gender-based statistics and staff analysis for government and community
Publications	Research-based reports, journals, bibliographies	Newsletters announcing services and programs	Annual reports, gender equality policy, harassment policy and guidelines
Library-related activities	Books, periodicals and/or primary source materials to sustain graduate and faculty research	Materials addressing gender issues and personal and professional growth	Preservation of documents related to gender issues; gender-based statistics in university archives
Partnerships	Researchers in the field of gender studies, research networks	Community, advocacy groups, professionals, volunteers	Equity-focused offices, outside institutions that work on gender issues, national and local

			government, business communities
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Willinger “Women’s Centers, Their Missions, and the Process”,2002, pp.505-506. Inuzuka, “ Kanada no Koukyouseisaku to Daigaku no Kanriunei : Koyou no Kouheisei ni taisuru Konpuraiansu Hyoukaseido”, 2006, pp.230-231.

3. National Policy Environment for Gender Equality in Japan

The most important policy drive for gender equality in Japan has been the enactment of *the Basic Law for Gender-Equal Society* in 1999. Article 8 (Responsibility of the State) provides that “the State is responsible for the comprehensive formation of a Gender-Equal Society (including positive action) pursuant to the basic principles of formation of a Gender-Equal Society prescribed in Article 3 to 7.” Article 10 (Responsibility of Citizens) states that “Citizens shall make efforts to contribute to the formation of a Gender-Equal Society in all areas of society, including workplaces, schools, the local community and the home, pursuant to the basic principles.”

Following the Basic Law, *the Plan for Gender Equality* was established at the headquarters for the Promotion on Gender Equality in 2000. The Plan carries 11 priority objectives. The objective of Priority 5, for example, is to “support the efforts of women and men to harmonize work with their family.” It is confirmed that the workplace must establish “*family friendly*” environments for workers. The objective of Priority 10 is to “enrich education and learning to promote gender equality and facilitate diversity of choice.” It articulates that the promotion of gender equality in institutions of higher learning, as well as the enhancement of career/employment guidance, are significant because of the gender gap existing within higher

education and with regard to career choices (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office 2001 : 103-111).

On the other hand, there has been a very significant change in the area of national higher education policy. In 2002, *the Policy for the Structural Reform of Universities* was enhanced to introduce the principle of competition with a view to further accelerating the flow of reform so that universities in Japan could become even more vigorous and internationally competitive than in the past. *The 21st Century Centers of Excellence program (COE)* is one of the significant projects related to this national policy.

In FY2002 and FY2003, 85 universities and 246 centers were approved as COE programs in ten of the total number of academic fields through the board of review of the *Japan Society for the Promotion of Science*. In 2003, there were two successful applications concerning “gender studies,” of which one was Ochanomizu University’s “*Frontiers of Gender Studies*.” Ochanomizu University began as *Tokyo Women's Normal School* in 1875, and developed since then as one of Japan’s two national women’s universities. The other COE program on gender studies is Tohoku University School of Law’s “*Gender, Law and Policy Center*.”

We can see another policy environment of gender and higher education in the report of the “*conference to support the diversification of careers for women*,” which was held by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports (MEXT 2000). Based on this report’s recommendations, MEXT encourages universities and research institutions to set out relevant frameworks and action plans for gender equality, as well as to specify targets for hiring and appointing female researchers to higher positions. Based on this trend, MEXT started another new program in 2006, “*pilot programs to support female researchers*,” through competitive project funding (20-50 million yen per year for one project, up to 6 years) (Yamanoi 2005: 81).

This program is provided through the same competitive procedures as the 21st Century COE Program on research, and the *Good Practice Program* (GP) on teaching and supporting students. 36 universities applied in 2006, and 10 were approved. Seven are the programs of national university corporations (the former national universities) (Table 2).

Table 2 Pilot Programs to Support Female Researchers (2006)

University Name	Applied Project	Co-education/ Single Sex Education	Public/ Private
Tokyo Women's Medical University	Support Center for Female Medical Scientists	Women	Private
Kumamoto University	Career path program with community partnerships*	Co-ed	Public
Kyoto University	Comprehensive support program for female researchers*	Co-ed	Public
Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology	Empowerment program for female scientists*	Co-ed	Public
Japan Women's University	Multi-career program for female researchers*		Private
Tohoku University	Mori-no-miyako female scientist hurdling support project	Co-ed	Public
Waseda University	Gender equality plan for training of researchers*	Co-ed	Private
Nara Women's University	Lifetime career support system for female researchers*	Women	Public
Ochanomizu University	Employment environment reform for female researchers*	Women	Public
Hokkaido University	Structure of model recruitment conditions and plan for women researchers	Co-ed	Public

MEXT, http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/jinzai/koubo/06060127/002/001.htm

* translated by Noriko Inuzuka

4. A Case Study of Organizations for Gender Equality in Universities : Tohoku University

This section examines the case of Tohoku University's gender equality programs by typology, and as it relates to the current government strategy on gender equality. Firstly, Tohoku

University founded the Type 1 institution, a gender research center, in 2003. The university's School of Law applied for a "*gender, law and policy center*" project through MEXT's *21st Century Centers of Excellence program (COE)*. The project consisted of about 20 professors, and was enhanced by top-rung management leaders. Receiving about 100 million yen in aid grants- per year from MEXT, the center houses ten researchers and also rents space for research activities outside campus.

The center focuses on legal and political scientific research into theoretical problems related to the 21st century gender-equal societies that are being promoted in Japan and elsewhere in the world. It aims to establish a new field of gender law and policy studies, and to produce gender-sensitive researchers, lawyers, and policy professionals. It also encourages applied research in policy implementations by keeping a close connection with local governments and bar associations, as well as by organizing several research clusters related to the following areas: (1) political participation, (2) employment, (3) family, (4) physical liberty, (5) human security, and (6) gender and education.

The undergraduate course titled "*Gender and Human Society*," which is taught by the professors and fellows of the COE program, drew over 250 students in 2006. While gender studies have gradually been receiving higher status in the university, grants-in-aid last only for 5 years. It seems very difficult, therefore, to be able to continue the project in the same way without government funding.

Secondly, concerning Type 2 organizations, Tohoku University has neither any gender empowerment centers nor diversity offices—a developmental delay that is due to the weakness of "bottom-up" movements in the university. Students do not attempt to protest in order to transform the university culture, and faculty and staff are not accustomed to create networks in

order to make their work conditions and personal lives better. Gradually, however, the situation is changing. The “*working group for the balancing of work and family*” of the Committee of Gender Equality at Tohoku University started a project to establish nursing schools on campus in 2001. After four years of efforts, the committee was able to open one nursing school (Tohoku University 2005 :6). Efforts for gender equality and the improvement of research and labor environments are hence continuing. The university decided that there was a need to offer more help to female researchers, for example, and therefore initiated the “*Mori-no-miyako female scientists hurdling support project.*” The university applied this to the “*Pilot Programs to Support Female Researchers*” of MEXT , and was successful in 2006.

This project includes the following: (1) child care and health care support programs, such as a part-time work system and the hiring of research/education support workers; (2) environmental improvement programs enriching the work environment and nurseries for sick children; (3) promotion/enrichment programs for the next generation, including the “Science Angel” project where students hold seminars at high schools; and (4) the establishment of female student networks and female researchers.

Thirdly, concerning Type 3 (*steering committees of gender equality*), Tohoku University is aiming to become a leading organization in this regard along with Nagoya University. Table 3 recounts a chronology of the activities for gender equality committees in Japan’s universities.

Table 3. Activities of Gender Equality Committees in Japan's Universities

(1999, May)	Yamaguchi University: Establishment of " Equal Partnership Committee"
(2000, September)	Nagoya University: Establishment of "Study Committee of Gender Equality"
(2001, March)	Board of Trustees of Nagoya University: "Recommendations for Promotion of Gender Equality in Nagoya University"
(2001, April)	Tohoku University: Establishment of "Committee of Gender Equality"
(2002, March)	Equal Partnership Committee, Yamaguchi University: " Recommendation for Promotion of Gender Equality in Yamaguchi University"
(2002, April)	Tohoku University: "Proposals to Enhance Policy for Gender Equality in Tohoku University"
(2003,January)	Nagoya University: Establishment of the "Office of Gender Equality"
(2003,December)	Tokyo University: " Proclamation of Gender Equality at Tokyo University"
(2005,April)	Kyushu University: "Proposal Document for Promotion of Gender Equality in Kyushu"

The *Japan Association of National Universities* served as a backdrop to the development of steering committees for gender equality (Danjo-kyoudou-sankaku iinkai) at some universities. This organization established the "*Working Group for Promotion of Gender Equality*," for example, and also compiled a report entitled "*Toward Realization of Gender Equality at National Universities*" on May 19, 2000 (Japanese Association National Universities 2000). The

report suggests that universities declare basic principles and policies both on and off campus, and also take practical steps towards the realization of gender equality. The general assembly of the *Japan Association of National Universities* that was held on June 14, 2000 proposed that the ratio of women faculty members at national universities be tripled to 20% by the year 2010.

Concurrently, with the reorganization of Japan's ministries and agencies in January 2001, the national government established the "*Gender Equal Committee*" to survey and monitor the extent to which various related policies have actually been implemented. Given these policy trends, some universities have decided to establish "Gender Equality (Study) Committees" in order to extensively discuss measures to promote gender equality within the university.

Tohoku University established a "Committee of Gender Equality" in 2001 aimed at conducting surveys, public relations, gender-sensitive education and the creation of consultation services. It distributed a questionnaire survey to all staff on gender equality, and in 2002 it released "Proposals to Enhancement Policy for Gender Equality in Tohoku University" and the "Tohoku University Declaration of Promotion for Gender Equality." In 2003, it created the "*Sawayanagi Awards*" (Gender Equality Awards), which is a competitive funding source for research, activities and projects at Tohoku University. Every year, the committee holds an annual symposium on gender equality (Tohoku University 2005: 2). In 2006, it approved the "Appeal for Enhancing Gender Equality and Establishing the Network in Universities" with the participants of the Fourth Gender Equality Symposium of Tohoku University, as well as the staff of Akita University, Yamaguchi University, Nagoya University, Hitotsubashi University and Waseda University (Gender Law and Policy Center 2006: 2).

5. Conclusion

National policy and its approach toward gender equality has had certain effects on former national universities in Japan. In particular, influences have been seen in research-centered universities with regard to competitive project funding. Steering committees for gender equality (“*Danjo-kyodo-sankaku*”) have been developing mainly in former national universities. The establishment of such committees has been useful for the promotion of gender equality in Japan’s universities, which are said to have a “top-down” organizational culture. The most important work of these committees is to collaborate with various institutions within universities. The delay of the development of Type 2 facilities are partly because of weaknesses in grassroots movements and in the activities of students and staff in Japan’s universities during recent times. This slows down progress, thereby impeding the ability to catch up with the opportunities of national policies.

I would like to ask, however: is the lack of “bottom- up” movements only seen with regard to the case of gender equality issues in Japan’s universities ?

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