

Realities and Challenges of Internationalizing Administrative Staff in Japanese Universities

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Abstract

This study examines the realities and challenges of internationalizing administrative staff in Japanese universities empirically due to the increasing globalization of higher education. The functions and roles of the administrative staff from the policy perspective, with the implementation of mandatory staff development (SD) and reforms to the standards for establishing universities, have been considered. This study attempts to describe the following three aspects: the international nature, working and training overseas experience, and administrative staff's educational background. The open data were obtained from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science website. The results of revealed that acquired insights can also become useful inputs for developing university policies concerning recruitment guidelines, methods, staff training, and "human capital development" in Japanese universities. This finding contributes to the policy making and SD of the internationalizing administrative staff in various countries in terms of foreign nationality, overseas experience, and educational background.

Keywords: administrative staff, international experience, Japan, Top Global University Project, university internationalization

Introduction

The importance of the internationalization of universities has been highlighted in various studies (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Jafar & Sabzalieva, 2022; Rumbley et al., 2012). In this rapidly globalizing world, several universities are propelled to undertake measures and formulate strategic approaches toward internationalization (Cheng, et al., 2017;

Nolan & Hunter, 2012; Stromquist, 2007); there are some discussions on “meaning of internationalization” (Knight, 1994, p. 1) and “the term foreigner and its impact on prejudice” (Asbrock et al., 2014, p. 1).

Internationalization of Universities’ Administrative Staff

University campuses are composed of not only students but also faculties and administrative staff as main constituents, and the internationalization of these staff members is positioned as an important challenge for examination and consideration (Ota, 2011). Among faculty members, the focus has been on the academic profession (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Welch, 1997), international movement of researchers (Teichler, 2015), and international comparison of international faculties (Huang, 2021; Huang & Welch, 2021). Concerning students, attention has been directed to student mobility (Banks & Bhandari, 2012; Brooks & Waters, 2011; Hugonnier, 2017) and actual international experiences (Baik, 2018) and their effects on the undergraduate curriculum and graduate education (Ammigan & Langton, 2018; Bista, 2019).

However, Brandenburg (2016, 2017) highlights that there has been relatively little consideration of the internationalization of administrative staff. In this context, the focus on the roles and functions of administrative staff has increased since the 2000s, mainly in Europe and North America (American Council on Education [ACE], 2012, 2017; Systemic University Change Towards Internationalization [SUCTI], 2017).

In Germany, the July 2007 Center for Higher Education (CHE) working paper *How to Measure Internationality and Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions! Indicators and Key Figures* included “general administrative staff/nonacademic staff” (Brandenburg & Federkeil, 2007, p. 18) as one of its “indicators for internationality and internationalisation” (Brandenburg & Federkeil, 2007, p. 12). German researchers acknowledged and highlighted the role of administrative staff in university internationalization (Brandenburg, 2017); Swedish researchers also highlighted a heightened presence of administrative professionals in international areas (Karlsson & Rytberg, 2016, p. 1).

In the United States, nongovernmental organizations lead in creating and presenting guidelines, conducting mapping surveys, and developing an international index for measuring the internationalization of institutions such as universities. ACE developed indices for internationalization, including the 2003 *Internationalizing the Campus: A User’s Guide*, a guideline for professional faculty and staff involved in internationalization, and *Measuring Internationalization*, released in 2005 as the results of their investigations (Noda, 2013). In particular, *Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses* (2017) includes the ratio of funding provision for “staff professional development abroad” (p. 14) as part of the staff development (SD). Further, NAFSA refers to the CHE working paper mentioned above in *Measuring and Assessing Internationalization*, indicating specific goals and measures for administrative staff in university internationalization efforts (Green, 2012).

Potential Issues with Internationalizing Administrative Staff in Japanese Universities

Internationalizing universities in Japan has been a source of academic interest since the 1970s (Ebuchi, 1997; Kitamura, 1984; Kobayashi, 1979; Maeda, 1968), and the subject continues to draw notable attention in both case studies and policy (Horie, 2002; Kitamura, 1997; Ninomiya et al., 2009; Yonezawa, 2009; Huang, 2021). If we look back at the major Japanese policies on university internationalization, “the International Student 100,000 Plan” of 1983 is regarded as an event that set the process in motion (Yonezawa, 2009). “The International Student 300,000 Plan” was announced in 2008 with additional policies such as the “Global 30” in 2009, “the Inter-University Exchange Project” in 2011, and “the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resource Development” in 2012 (JSPS, n.d.). Since 2014, the “Top Global University” (TGU) Project has been promoted to an unprecedented degree in terms of its financial scale and duration (JSPS, n.d.; MEXT., n.d.; Shimmi & Yonezawa, 2015).

Most of the policies have focused on faculty and students, with significantly related research being conducted (Hennings & Mintz, 2015; Huang, 2021). However, as established, the administrative staff members are major actors in the context of internationalizing Japanese universities (Kimura, 2015; Ota, 2011). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)’s *University Administrative Staff Issues* (MEXT, 2017) introduces an example of administrative staff handling international duties and contacts with overseas universities and creating and organizing application materials for establishing joint degree programs as systematized in November 2014.

In the School Basic Survey, MEXT classified the Japanese university administrative staff as clerical, technical, medical, and academic (MEXT, 2021, p. 3). The administrative staff members are defined as those handling general affairs,

accounting, and human resources (MEXT, 2021, p. 3); there were 91,701 administrative staff members in 2019, which is approximately 37% of all the administrative staff (MEXT, 2019). Article 41 of the University Establishment Standards regulates “administrative staff organizations” as follows: “Universities are to establish suitable clerical organizations employing dedicated staff to handle their administrative work” (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [MIC], n.d.). However, researchers have observed that in recent years, these administrative duties have become more advanced and specialized in nature (Kaneko, 2008, 2017), symbolized in policy by the report on the University Governance reform (Council Summary) issued in 2014 by the Central Council for Education (CCE) University Subcommittee. The report notes that with regard to administrative staff, “each university is to make use of, according to its circumstances, personnel with advanced professional skills,” and it reconfirms the importance of SD simultaneously (CCE, 2014, pp. 18–19).

Although considerable research has focused on faculty and teaching staff in universities, few studies have been conducted on administrative staff in Japanese universities. To understand the realities related to issues of internationalizing administrative staff, acquiring more encompassing data on the situation, including the profile, skills, and various overseas in-service training of administrative staff, is essential.

Brandenburg (2016) emphasizes two primary elements, namely, “recruiting staff with prior international experience” and “SD,” (p. 16) Accordingly, the primary purpose of this study is to examine the realities and challenges of the internationalization of administrative staff in Japanese universities based on the data which were obtained from public information

The following two research questions were addressed:

RQ1. What are the realities of administrative staff in university internationalization?

RQ2. What are the challenges and implications for internationalizing administrative staff at the universities?

Literature Review

This literature reviews organize previous studies on the realities and challenges of the internationalization of administrative staff in Japanese universities. Specifically, this study focuses on the following three points:

Need for Recruitment of Administrative Staff with Foreign Nationality

Recruiting the constituent members of a university is an important issue. Universities in Japan and abroad, called on to internationalize rapidly, are influenced by the indicators set by global university rankings to make every effort to recruit able and diverse constituent members. Regarding administrative staff, the staffing issue in student affairs and services has been discussed in the United States since the late 1990s (e.g., Winston & Creamer, 1997; Winston et al., 2001). Winston and Creamer (1997) observed that “the connection between the quality of staffing practices in student affairs and the quality of educational services delivered to students is direct and powerful” (p. 12), hinting at a connection between staffing practices and related duties. This staffing issue has a direct influence on recruitment.

At universities in Japan, in addition to the international fluidity of faculty, recruitment issues such as hiring foreign faculty (Kitamura, 1984, pp. 110–114) and improving their status (Kitamura, 1982) have been a subject of interest. Contrarily, there has been limited research on administrative staff recruitment. This is because Japanese universities, particularly national universities, even after their incorporation in 2004, tend to hire individuals who pass the National University Corporation Staff Employment Exam (CRUMP, 2010), and thus, the issue of recruitment has not been raised as a major point.

For example, “the National University Corporation Staff Employment Exam” website lists among administrative staff duties, “assignment to university secretariats or academic department offices, etc., to handle duties including general affairs, human resources, financial work and accounting, student affairs and support, research support, international exchange, and affiliated hospitals medical support” (National University Corporation, 2021). This description indicates that international exchange and other areas related to university internationalization are just one aspect of the diverse duties of administrative staff. According to MEXT’s survey report on leading university reform (MEXT, 2015, p. 11), “employment policies and plans for specialized staff” are generally “similar to those for administrative staff overall.”

In short, there appear to be challenges to recruiting and maintaining advanced specialized staff for international duties. Internationalizing universities is focusing on language skills (Yonezawa, 2018), communication skills, understanding

of diversity, and international experience in multicultural work environments among international administrative staff (Katsuhira et al., 2013). Additionally, even in Japan, many universities are beginning to provide English-medium degree programs, which require not only faculty but also administrative support staff.

International Oriented Training and Professional Development at Japanese Universities

In universities worldwide, duties are becoming more advanced and specialized, and expectations are increasing as never before for the roles and functions of administrative staff. CHE's working paper noted above refers to "international administration exchange programs" and "internationally oriented further training programs" as indicators of internationalization (Brandenburg & Federkeil, 2007, p. 18).

In Japanese universities, interest in and needs regarding the training, self-education, and development of qualities and skills of administrative staff have been on the rise since the early 1990s (Oba, 2006, pp. 275–276). Training and professional development for administrative staff mainly concern "general training," "assistance with self-education funding," "dispatch to universities," "financial aid for university study," "awards and capacity evaluation," and graduate school "master's courses" (Yamamoto, 2008a, p. 135). MEXT identified that SD, i.e., "institutional approaches for faculty and staff quality improvement, including management and education/research support," was active for universities at 78.5% in 2014 and 88.4% in 2018 (MEXT, 2020, p. 43). The five most common training purposes were "deepening basic knowledge and understanding on university issues" (77.3%), "gaining knowledge of duty areas" (67.7%), "supporting academic education" (42.3%), "improving communication abilities" (41.8%), and "improving management abilities" (40.7%) (MEXT, 2020, p. 43). University internationalization presently requires recruitment aimed at staff with foreign language abilities, knowledge, skills, and problem-solving ability (JSPS, 2010). For example, the International Affairs Department of Nagoya University requires "not only language ability but also knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity as well as 'high communication ability' dedicated to achieving communication and reaching goals" (Katsuhira et al., 2013, p. 87). Cross-university training programs include MEXT's Long-term Educational Administrators Program for International Exchange, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), and International Academic Exchange Training (International Fellows) program, coupled with local training initiatives utilizing individual universities' overseas bases and offices.

Administrative Staff's Educational Background and Related Graduate School Education

As observed earlier in this report, in contrast with faculty educational backgrounds, administrative staff backgrounds have rarely been the subject of research. This is partly related to national universities, "longtime existence of civil service exams" and "the subsequent mechanisms for hiring and promotion, and particular qualities of the former Ministry of Education" (Yamamoto, 2008a, p. 133). However, due to the corporation of national universities in 2004, individual universities at present can conduct their recruitment and promotion to acquire human resources with diverse backgrounds.

The main studies among the scant survey research on the educational backgrounds of administrative staff are by Yamamoto (2008b) and CRUMP (2010). First, Yamamoto (2008b, p. 5) studied the 2006 JSPS Grant-in-Aid and found that among the respondents (N = 1,405), there were 1,041 college graduates, 64 with master's degrees, 4 with doctorates, and 296 others (junior college, high school, etc.); there were 74.1% college graduates, 4.6% master's degree holders, 0.3% doctorate holders, and 21.0% others. This shows that the administrative staff members with master's or doctoral degrees are a minority, a trend that was also found in the National University Administrative Staff Survey. Among all respondents (N = 5,909), 68.8% held bachelor's degrees, 26.0% reported other educational backgrounds (junior college, technical college, vocational school, no response, etc.), and 5.2% held graduate degrees (CRUMP, 2010, p. 6).

Although researchers on the latter survey did not distinguish between master's and doctoral degree holders, their finding is consistent with Yamamoto's results for advanced degree holders, and the proportions of bachelor's degree holders were similar as well (Yamamoto, 2008b, p. 5). However, neither of the above surveys provided basic data on whether administrative staff with overseas degrees (bachelor's, master's, or doctoral) or their statuses. Since administrative staff handling international duties require advanced skills and should communicate frequently with universities overseas (Katsuhira et al., 2013, pp. 94–99), international departments likely have a significant need for staff with overseas bachelor's and/or graduate degrees.

Additionally, the opportunities for graduate study are increasing (JUAM, 2021, p. 144). In the 2000s, Japanese universities began establishing graduate curricula targeting administrative staff, which at present number approximately 10 schools (Kaneko, 2017, p. 12). In addition to master's or doctoral courses, universities (e.g., the University of Tokyo and Hiroshima University) are offering diverse methods of learning, including studies focused on individual subjects, certificate programs, and distance learning (Kaneko, 2017, p. 14). In fact, in the National University Administrative Staff Survey cited above, 40% of administrative staff was reported to be interested in graduate study, with 8.3% "very interested" in "attending a master's program" and 30.4% "interested if given the opportunity" (CRUMP, 2010, p. 114).

In recent years, some universities began dispatching their specialist staff not only to Japanese training programs but also to overseas master's degree courses. For example, Waseda University (one of the Japanese private universities), to "cultivate human resources able to contribute to university policy decisions, taking one year away from the workplace to enter graduate school in Japan or overseas and acquiring a master's degree (MA/MBA etc.) in a field closely related to university administration" dispatched administrative staff from the Faculty of Science and Engineering to the full-time MBA program at the University of Oxford (Waseda University, n.d.).

Theoretical Framework

With regard to the role of administrative staff members in university internationalization, as stated by Brandenburg (2016, 2017), their roles are extremely important. Moreover, Hunter et al., (2018) posit:

Building commitment to internationalization among both academic and administrative staff requires a carefully thought-through strategic process involving the whole institution and providing appropriate human resource development. (Hunter et al., 2018, "Internationalisation and administrative staff", para. 3)

Here, it is reaffirmed that universities intending to commit to internationalization must also commit to the "human resource development" of administrative staff (Hunter et al., 2018). It is important to develop university administrative staff skills, capacities, and resources. When it comes to the internationalization of universities, it is necessary to take stock of the reality surrounding administrative university staff and analyze how to develop these human resources using theoretical approaches.

In this aspect, this study proves valuable by modifying Brinton's conceptual framework of a "human capital development system" (Brinton, 1988, p. 305; Brinton, 2008, pp. 52–53) to examine the provision of professional development opportunities for administrative staff as an organizational initiative and offering consideration points in exploring how this can be practically realized.

For example, Brinton (2008) defined "human capital development system" as a framework in which "individuals master and use the necessary skills and capacities as members of society," categorizing individuals as the "self-led type" who "take responsibility" and the "other-led type," who require involvement from other "stakeholders" (parents, schools, corporations, etc.) (p. 53). Brinton (2008) stated clearly that "In Japan, when individuals master and use the necessary skills and capacities as members of society, parents, schools, and corporations played a major role." (p. 68)

Thus, focusing on "members" of "schools" (Brinton, 2008, p. 68) including universities, this study modified Brinton's conceptual framework of the "human capital development system" to establish our conceptual framework where individual administrative staff "can master and use the necessary skills and capacities as members" (Brinton, 2008, p. 53) of Japanese universities.

Methodology

This study investigates the characteristics of Japanese university administrative staff as members of the university including whether they have any training or working experience overseas, and if they hold oversea university degrees. This study has adopted qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009; Frick, 2009, p. 255) by government policy documents and related reports of Japanese higher education and the case study data of applicants and recruit information for university administrative staff. As Frick (2009) points out, we "can use the analysis of documents as stand-alone method" (p. 255). With reference to Kariya's (2017, pp. 51-64) analysis of the reality and challenges of Internationalizing faculties, this study analyzes these documents and reports which were obtained from public information available on the JSPS website, in

particular from the TGU Project plans and “2019 Follow-Up Results” (JSPS, 2019). This project prioritizes “support for universities that are thoroughgoing in their efforts to internationalize,” including 37 leading Japanese universities (MEXT, n.d.; Shimmi & Yonezawa, 2015). Especially, this analysis focuses on the open data from 13 Japanese universities, namely, Hokkaido University, Tohoku University, University of Tsukuba, the University of Tokyo, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Nagoya University, Kyoto University, Osaka University, Hiroshima University, Kyusyu University, Keio University, and Waseda University.

It is important that these JSPS’s documents (JSPS, 2019) can reveal trends and shifts over several years among administrative staff in major Japanese universities. In this respect, these document analysis of this study aimed to indicate the characteristics of Japanese university administrative staff in terms of four ratio (ratios of international administrative staff to total number of full-time administrative staff, ratio of training or working, including staff development overseas to the total number of full-time administrative staff with at least one year, ratio of Japanese administrative staff with a degree from a oversea university to total number of full-time administrative staff, and ratio of degree courses at graduate level conducted in foreign languages only to all degree courses). Additionally, in the “descriptive methods” (Frick, 2009, p. 17) this study analyzed the detailed case example of the mid-career applicants and recruit information on Ritsumeikan University and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). This analysis allowed potential issues and problems pertaining to university administrative staff to emerge.

Results

As witnessed so far, it is important for the internationalization of universities in Japan (Yamada, 2021; Yonezawa, 2009), Europe (e.g., Zhang, 2021), and North America (e.g., Veerasamy, 2021), to focus on administrative staff and understand the actual situation and conditions surrounding them.

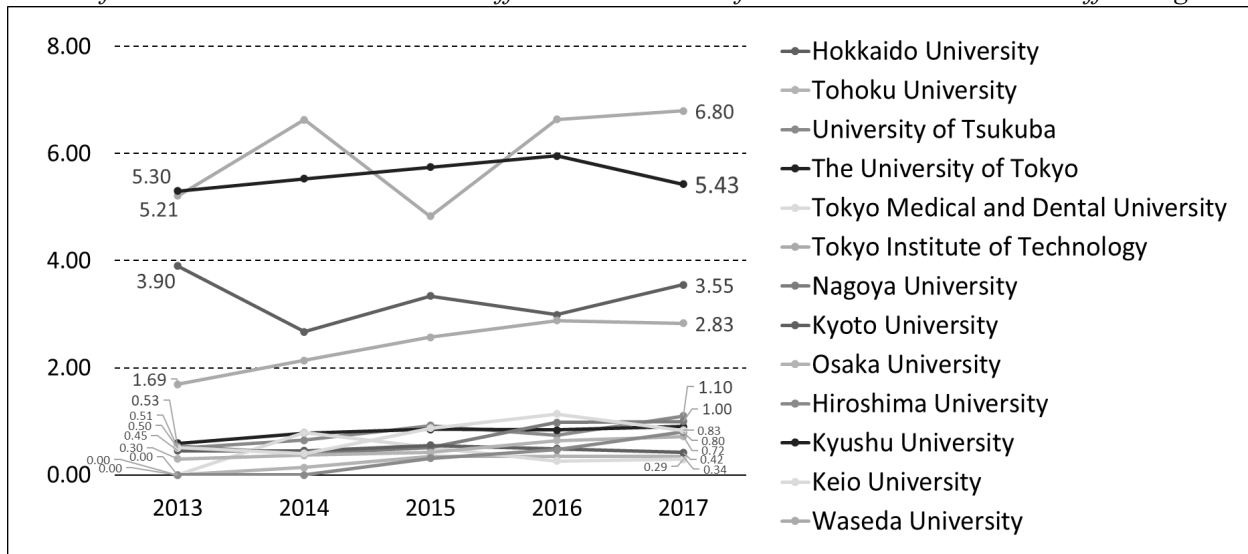
This section discusses and shows the realities and challenges of internationalizing Japanese administrative staff by applying and developing the modified conceptual framework of their international training and/or working experience.

Characteristics of Japanese University Staff

Figure 1 presents the ratios for administrative staff of foreign nationality over a period of five years, 2013–2017. Looking at individual universities, Tokyo Institute of Technology increased by 1.59%, from 5.21% in 2013 to 6.80% in 2017, while Kyushu University showed a minute increase, from 5.30% in 2013 to 5.43% in 2017 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Ratios of International Administrative Staff to Total Number of Full-time Administrative Staff during 2013–2017 (%)



Source:
Based on

JSPS (2019, pp. 17–18)

There are nine universities that had almost no international staff in among leading universities in 2017. Although much still remains to be done in terms of using survey among universities, there has been no notable increase in the rate of foreign nationality staff (Figure 1).

One possible reason for this is the assumption that the administrative staff at Japanese universities will take part in internal meetings, prepare documents, and conduct various interdepartmental arrangements in Japanese; considerably, “it is rare to hire people from other countries for essential administrative staff posts” (Onishi & Oda, 2016, p. 111). Therefore, we can witness that the workplace system and environment at Japanese universities makes it difficult to recruit and retain international administrative staff.

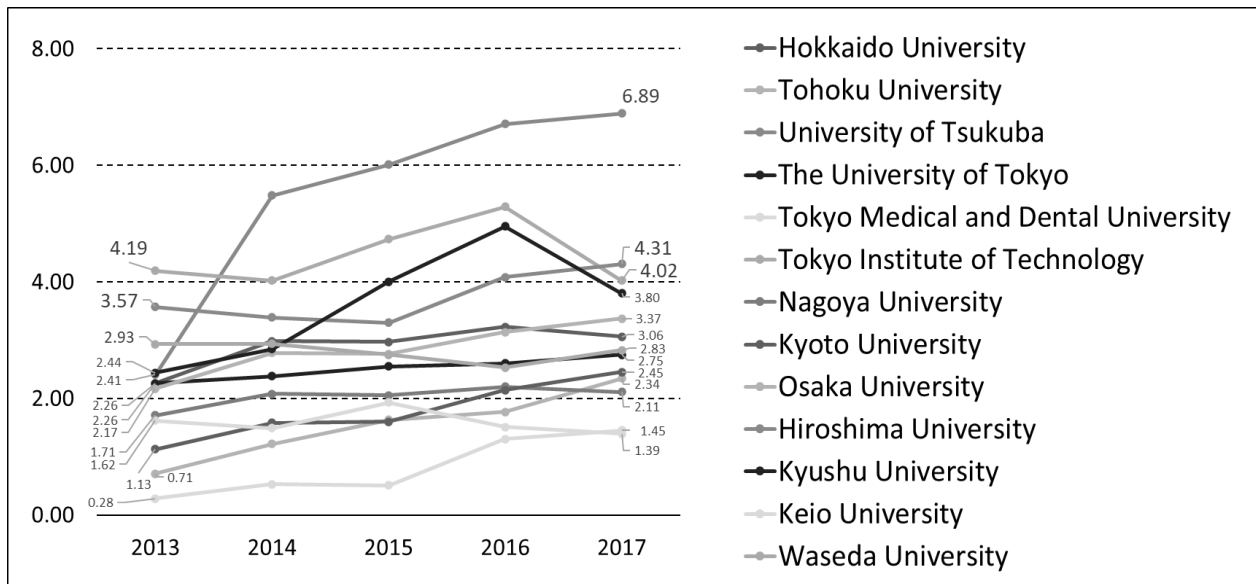
Japanese University Staff with Training and Work Experience in an Overseas Environment

The need for administrative staff training and professional development is increasing among Japanese universities, and SD is taking place in diverse forms, including within individual universities and university organizations as well as university collaborations and individual study programs (JUAM, 2021). However, in accordance with university internationalization, the existing domestic and in-house training, and focus on training and workplace experience overseas (Maeda, 2016), we address the status of work and training overseas among the administrative staff.

Figure 2 presents the proportion of Japanese administrative staff members with at least one year of total work experience or training overseas over a period of five years (2013–2017). Additionally, some universities expanded their opportunities for overseas study and work. Considering individual universities, Tohoku University increased by 1.63%, from 0.71% in 2013 to 2.34% in 2017, while Tokyo Medical and Dental University increased by 1.17%, from 0.28% in 2013 to 1.45% in 2017. Hiroshima University increased by 0.74%, from 3.57% in 2013 to 4.31% in 2017. Tohoku University, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, and Hiroshima University are among those with no previously noted staff of foreign nationality (Figure 1). However, they are apparently working to enrich their Japanese staff’s overseas training and work experience, which suggests that each university has its approach to the internalization of administrative staff.

Figure 2

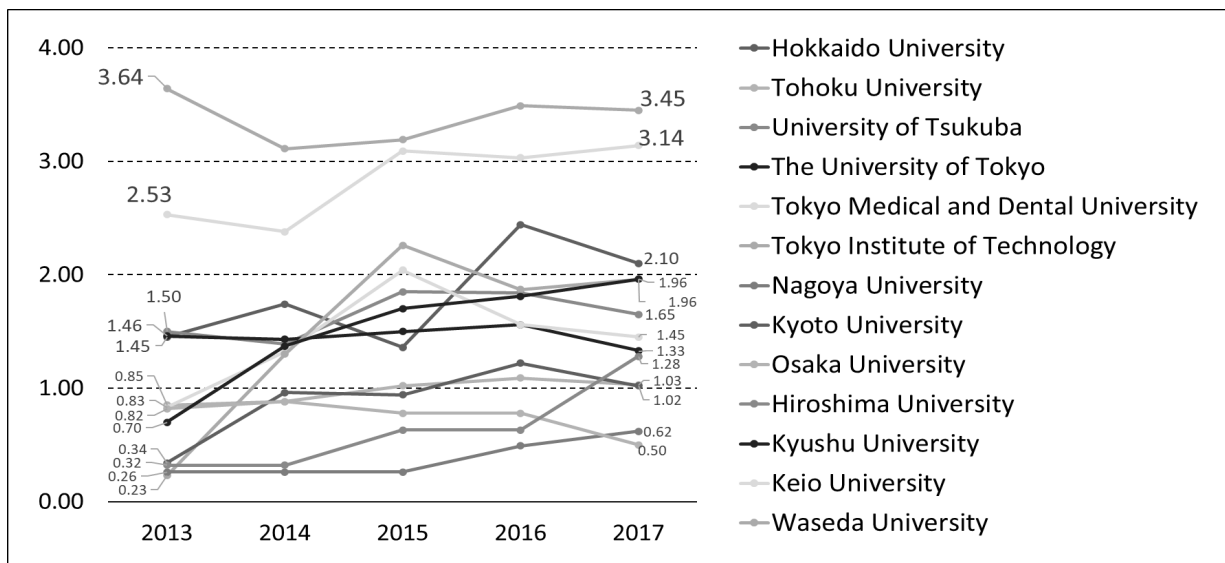
Ratio of Training or Working, Including Staff Development (SD), Overseas to the Total Number of Full-time Administrative Staff with at least One Year during 2013–2017 (%)



Source: Based on JSPS (2019, pp. 17–18)

Figure 3

Ratio of Japanese Administrative Staff with a Degree from an Oversea University to Total Number of Full-time Administrative Staff during 2013–2017 (%)



Source: Based on JSPS (2019, pp. 17–18)

Administrative Staff in Japanese Universities Who Have Degrees from Overseas

As reviewed, the educational background status of the administrative staff has not been sufficiently surveyed. However, as universities internationalize, the role of Japanese staff with degrees from overseas universities is likely to become more important.

Although the Tokyo Institute of Technology increased by 1.73% over a period of five years (2013–2017), most universities showed no clear changes (Figure 3). In particular, the graph for the University of Tokyo and Waseda University are effectively flat. For a staff member who is still under employment, it is difficult for the university to accommodate if the staff wishes to obtain a degree from an overseas university, unlike short-term professional development and training courses. Even if the university hires new administrative staff with degrees from overseas universities, they cannot be easily incorporated into mid- or long-term positions without significant organizational engagement.

For example, Ritsumeikan University and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University among Japanese private universities explore mid-career applicants for university administrative positions and prioritize hiring “those with degrees from overseas universities or graduate schools” and “those of foreign nationality” as administrative staff (The Ritsumeikan Trust, n.d.), that is, recruiting administrative staff who are prepared to promote university internationalization rather than staff who require additional training to contribute to the internalization process (Yonezawa, 2018, p. 56).

Ritsumeikan University and Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University presented the following recruitment information for administrative staff in 2022: (Mid-career recruitment [The Ritsumeikan Trust, n.d.]):

- (1) Recruitment qualifications (partial): “Graduates of Japanese or international four-year universities (including master’s and doctoral programs) who can begin work from the day of hiring.” (The Ritsumeikan Trust, n.d.)

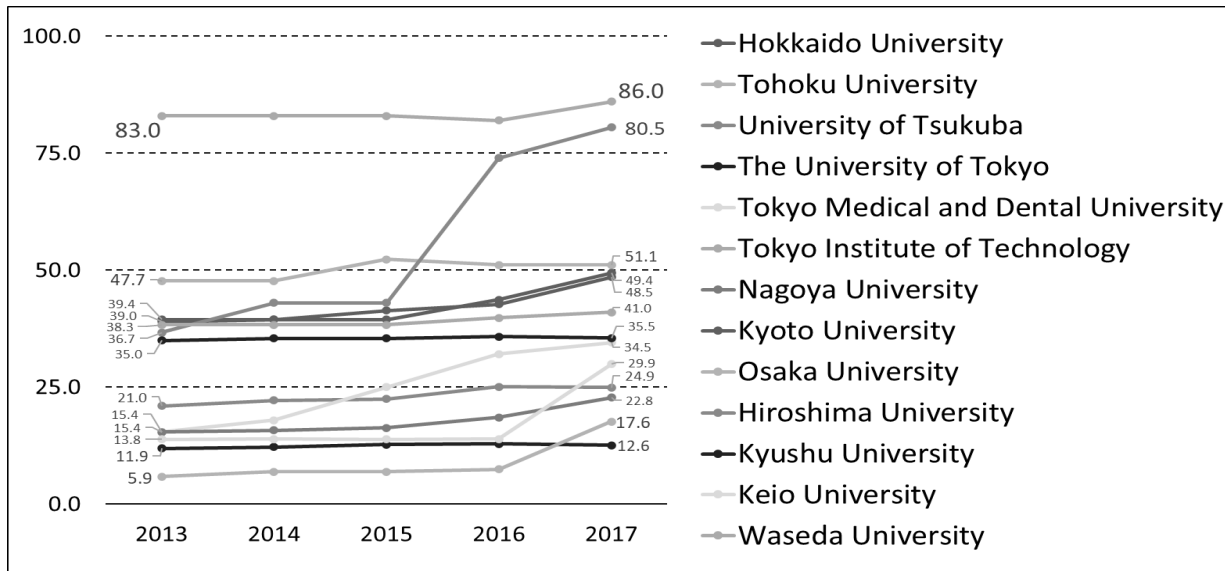
“Those with degrees from overseas universities and/or graduate schools, those with work experience overseas, and those of foreign nationality are welcome to apply.” (The Ritsumeikan Trust, n.d.)

- (2) Duties (partial): “Employees will handle the promotion of education and research and the management of the academic institution through the duties assigned to them in their department. Because approximately half the students and faculty at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University are of foreign nationality, staff will need to make

use of their foreign language abilities such as English. Assigned departments may include academic offices, student offices, career offices, research offices, admissions offices, and the President’s office.” (The Ritsumeikan Trust, n.d.)

Figure 4

Ratio of Degree Courses at Graduate Level Conducted in Foreign Languages Only to All Degree Courses during 2013–2017 (%)



Source: Based on JSPS (2019, pp. 45–47, pp. 49–50)

Universities have to consider internationalizing their administrative staff taking into account the unique circumstances they are in, and it remains a question whether universities are an attractive workplace for new graduates or mid-career applicants who have obtained degrees in overseas universities.

Discussion

Figure 1 that presents the proportion of international administrative staff in Japanese universities has not increased over time, even among universities in the TGU Project that are expected to heavily promote internationalization in the future. However, most of universities are providing English-medium degree courses and their programs, and the proportion of such programs is increasing at graduate levels (Figure 4).

Thus, this study noted the increasing number of international faculty members and researchers, in addition to international exchange students who can converse only in English in Japanese universities, and the context where there is an increase in foreign language degree courses and programs at the graduate level offered by universities (Figure 4). As Ota (2011) states, the staff of foreign nationality can provide high-quality work in a way which Japanese staff members cannot. For example, they can understand the struggles and difficulties unique to international exchange students and provide appropriate support. This is not to meet the goals of having an international administrative staff but also to undertake an active attempt for promoting diversity within the university community in the middle- and long- terms.

Kaneko (2017) suggests a need for “systematical learning experiences” (p. 13); the training content and programs “have not actually been systematically constructed” is an issue in SD (JUAM, 2021, p. 148). As the international staff gradually increases, the purposes, contents, and systems of SD are expected to become more complex. Brinton (2008) argued that the framework in which “individuals master and use the necessary skills and capacities as members of society” (p. 68), are important as “human capital development systems” (pp. 52–53). In addition, as mentioned in the “conceptual framework” section of this article, Brinton (2008) divided individuals into “self-led types” and “other-led types” and

observed that most Japanese workplaces are “other-led types” guided by other stakeholders (schools, corporations, etc.) (p. 53).

As per the mandatory university establishment standards of 2016, SD concerned with workplace experience and capacity development are being promoted in policy and organizational terms. Naturally, study options such as master’s courses and individual study and learning are encouraged; however, from the perspective of related systems, workplace environments, support measures, and “investment” in administrative staff at Japanese universities (Kaneko, 2017, p. 12), we think that they remain insufficient based on the analysis and discussion of this study.

Conclusion and Implications

This study examined the basic situation behind the internationalization of university administrative staff members, who received much less academic attention than other university members (e.g., faculty members, researchers, and graduate students). This study also reveals the necessity of examining administrative staff internationalization more closely. Furthermore, the insights can be employed for the development of university policies on recruitment guidelines and methods as well as the organization of staff training and talent development. However, only a few attempts have been made to analyze the basic situation of internationalizing administrative staff at Japanese universities compared to other countries

Specifically, this study reaffirmed that the proportion of international staff in Japanese universities is very small when compared to Japanese staff (Figure 1), and a few staff members have training, work experience, (Figure 2) or hold degrees from overseas universities (Figure 3). Grounded in the current policies related to internationalization of Japanese higher education (Shimmi & Yonezawa, 2015), this study recommends expanding administrative staff diversity and improving international SD training and opportunities for internationalizing Japanese universities in the near future.

Further research should investigate how and where the opportunities we clarified here for administrative staff’s international training, learning, capacity development, and “human resource development” (Hunter et al., 2018, “Internationalisation and administrative staff”, para. 3) are to be constructed, provided, and invested. Additionally, we need to examine important issues such as recruitment and hiring of administrative staff in Japanese universities. It is time to continue our focus on the “internationalization of constituent members” (Ota, 2011, p. S8) in a way that includes the administrative staff.

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