

## **Developing Professional Staff in Universities under Quality Assurance Systems**

Jun Oba

Human resource capacity has become a critical issue for contemporary universities in enabling them to deliver multiple agendas in complex environments (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007). In recent years, many governments have proceeded with deregulation and developed schemes to assure the quality of higher education. Today, universities have a greater autonomy under the new quality assurance systems but are, at the same time, required to be more accountable *vis-à-vis* their fund providers and other stakeholders, particularly the governments and other public or semi-public funding organisations. Furthermore, universities compete more and more globally with each other and with other knowledge providers. Not only academic staff but also administrators and other administrative and academic support staff members need to be more responsive to social demands and some of them are required to be professionalised<sup>1</sup> in certain functional areas, sometimes involving a blurring of the traditional boundaries of staff – academic and non-academic – in order to ensure the efficiency and optimise universities' outcomes.

This article considers issues and challenges in human resources, particularly in professionalisation of non-academic staff under new quality assurance systems.

### **1. Development of quality assurance systems and human resource issues**

*Development of quality assurance systems* Since the early 1990s, quality assurance schemes have been developing in national higher education systems. A complex of societal factors, such as concerns for a potential decline of standards in the context of massification, diminishing confidence of stakeholders in traditional informal academic quality control mechanisms, increasing public and political demand for more accountability, pressures to increase performance and cost-effectiveness, and the gradual development of a more competitive higher education market, have caused this important development (Damme, 2002). Concurrently, reforms inspired by new public management have emerged, and new governance models have appeared in universities as a result of a changing relationship between the higher education sector in general and the state (Boer & Stensaker, 2007). These changes can be termed the 'marketisation' of higher education<sup>2</sup>, which has developed synchronously with quality assurance systems.

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<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to explain in detail professionalisation and professional staff, but the term 'professional' relates to a job that needs special education and training.

<sup>2</sup> Efforts to seek, through more targeted regulation or through systematic deregulation, or to harness the market as a means of higher education reform are termed 'marketisation' of higher education (Dill, 1997a). According to Teixeira, Jongbloed, Dill, and Amaral (2004), autonomy, open markets and well-informed decentralised decision making are the key elements in marketisation policies. These elements should also be key elements for quality assurance systems.

This kind of shift is not confined to higher education, but has been occurring in many public services (Williams, 1995). In the 1980s, the Thatcher Government in the UK made extensive use of market mechanisms as a tool for promoting competition between public services with a view to increasing their efficiency and maximising the provision of social benefits (Amaral, 2007). In the European Union, by virtue of the concept developed by the Green Paper on Services of General Interest (Commission of the European Community, 2003), the market is expected to play an important role in the economy and for production of collective interest; public authorities have only to look after its smooth functioning and to safeguard the general interest, in particular the satisfaction of citizens' essential needs and the preservation of public goods where the market fails (Garcia, 2006). The European Commission has promoted marketisation especially in such areas as transportation and communication, and encouraged the member countries to conform to certain principles to assure the quality of services, including the establishment of regulatory bodies, representation and active participation of consumers and users in the definition and evaluation of services, and the choice of forms of payment. The Commission (2003) stresses: "This development should not mean that public authorities renounce their responsibility to ensure that objectives of general interest are implemented. By means of appropriate regulatory instruments public authorities should have the capability to shape national, regional or local policies in the area of services of general interest and to ensure their implementation."<sup>3</sup>

The development of quality assurance systems of higher education is in line with these moves towards marketisation. The European Bologna Process, of which the chief pillars are the harmonisation of degree structures and quality assurance (Musselin, Froment, & Ottenwaelter, 2007), is considered to transform what were once state monopolies of academic degrees into competitive international markets by the adoption of a common degree framework (Teixeira, Jongbloed, Dill, & Amaral, 2004). In other words, the development of quality assurance systems, particularly in Europe, is a governance reform of the higher education system, in which the role of the state is redefined.

***Quality assurance and human resource issues*** In new higher education governance systems, driven by a market mechanism as well as regulated by quality assurance schemes in which the state power is confined to ensuring their good functioning and to safeguard the general interest, higher education institutions (HEIs) tend to have an increased autonomy and a greater responsibility. They are expected to perform efficiently on their own initiatives to assure their assigned missions, although state regulations are not renounced and place more emphasis on transparency of the

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<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the process termed 'marketisation' is far from a shift towards a perfectly free competitive market. As Teixeira, Jongbloed, Dill and Amaral (ed.) (2004) suggest, the supposed social benefits of markets cannot be realised without the basic institutional framework of laws, and the critical issue for higher education therefore is how to configure government regulations so that they may maximise the social benefits of higher education systems. Similarly, Dill (1997) recognises that public policies are essential frameworks for the basic conditions of competitive markets. Trow (1996) sees the UK universities as operating, not in a market, but in something more like a command economy, although the rhetoric of the market is employed in connection with higher education.

activities, participation of users, and evaluation *a posteriori*. State control remains and often is not weakened, but appears in a more indirect manner (Mok, 2007).

This change, exemplified by rhetorics such as marketisation, deregulation, liberalisation, accountability and increased autonomy – all of them interwoven with new quality assurance systems – does not remain without consequences on the internal governance of HEIs. Two main effects of the recent changes in internal governance are an increase in participation on governing or supervisory bodies by representatives and individuals from outside the university and a strengthening of the power of executive authorities within the university (OECD, 2003). HEIs are now at the centre of a number of government policies and demands on universities have increased to the extent that they outrun their capacity to respond (Clark, 1998; OECD, 2004). As pressure mounts to make institutions more accountable, to develop better linkages with wider society and to raise external funds, their leaders need to be more than outstanding academics. Senior managers are selected for their leadership skills as well as for their academic prowess, with a loss of authority and decision-making power on the part of traditional participatory and collegial bodies (OECD, 2003).

At the same time, demand for administrative services and support continues to develop in both diversity and specialisation. Management of universities now requires of their administrative staff a professional commitment, the exercise of sophisticated skills and the shouldering of responsibilities at levels scarcely imagined by their predecessors of a few decades ago (Dobson & Conway, 2003). In addition, indirect policy tools adopted under the framework of quality assurance systems require HEIs to make many decisions on their own but sufficiently informed of government policies and a variety of other requirements. To respond to such needs, central administrative staff have been built up in response to problems of growth, equity, accountability, and duplication by enacting laws that require larger central offices to disburse funds, set uniform requirements, check compliance, and otherwise implement public policy (Clark, 1983).

Today, HEIs need professional managers in key non-academic functions and specialist administrative staff (OECD, 2004; McInnis, 1998). Gordon and Whitchurch (2007) argue that, because contemporary institutions are obliged to operate simultaneously in both global and local settings, they have become complex organisations, and that they increasingly require people who are able to contextualise academic activity against fluctuations in the external environment, be it in relation to, for instance, schools outreach, regional business development or overseas campuses. Revision of the role of the non-academic staff – those in administrative and academic support functions except for academic administrators – has been reiterated and numerous suggestions can be found in diverse policy papers and other literature.

1. In the UK, the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997) recognised that administrative and support staff played an increasingly central role in higher education, as a result of the growth of information technology, changes in the delivery of higher education, and the development of an ‘enterprise culture’ within higher

education. It recommended reviewing staff development policies to address their changing roles. Shattock (2003) draws attention to the quality of the appointments in the category of academic-related staff<sup>4</sup>, arguing that these appointees may provide the key elements in translating good academic performance and effective exploitation of local assets into institutional success.

2. In France, a governmental evaluation report on contractual policy (*politique de contractualisation*) – a policy that has significantly increased the autonomy of French universities (Musselin, 2001) – recommended an enhanced professionalisation of staff in order to manage their strategic projects (Frémont *et al.*, 2004). More recently, with reference to a new law for university autonomy (*Loi relative aux libertés et responsabilités des universités*), the minister in charge of higher education pointed to the need for new specialised managerial skills (Pécresse & Chupin, 2007).
3. In Norway, professionalisation of administrative staff developed in the 1980s and 1990s. Gornitzka and Larsen (2004) documented a restructuring of a university administrative work force showing many signs of development towards a professionalised university administration.
4. An Australian national survey showed that professional administrators were reshaping academic work by virtue of their increasingly pivotal roles in such areas as course management and delivery. As universities are increasingly held accountable by external agencies, the extent to which administrative staff support core values is crucial to the preservation of university autonomy, and the control of administrators working alongside academics increasingly impacts on such matters as curriculum selection and delivery, and on research agendas (McInnis, 1998).

***Collaboration and blurring boundaries between academic and non-academic staff*** In parallel with the development of professionalisation of non-academic functions, not only the role of academic staff is becoming more complex (Eckel, 2006) but also their authority has declined (McInnis, 2006). Askling (2001) recognises that a sharp growth in student numbers, renewal of programme and course structures, curriculum development, devolution of authority from the state to the institutions, combined with greater dependency on external funding has brought about a complexity of functions and activities for all categories of academic staff. Similarly, the OECD (2004) reports expanding roles for academics: many academics are now expected to engage in commercial activity, consultancy, advisory work and other forms of interaction with society. On the other hand, McInnis (2006) points to the dramatic increase in the dependence of academic staff on the specialist skills of professional and technical staff and the reduction of their influence in decision-making.

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<sup>4</sup> In the British system, these are administrative or professional staff appointed on salaries comparable to academic salaries (Shattock, 2003).

Given such complexity of the tasks of academic and non-academic staff and the changing power balance between them, a need for collaboration between both groups has been reiterated (Conway, 1998; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Gordon & Whitchurch, 2007; McInnis, 1998; Whitchurch, 2004). Duke (2003) indicates, for example, that enhancing collaborative teamwork between classes of workers (administrative, professional, academic, technical) is one aspect of new management, and is required by and grows with the external networking on which universities depend in order to play a useful and sustainable part in networked knowledge societies, and without which responsiveness and innovation will be stunted

Another consequence of these changes is, as Henkel (2000), McInnis (1998) and other authors suggest, a blurring of the boundaries between academic and non-academic staff. Pointing to the emergence of contributory functions required to contextualise work in global and mass higher education systems, Gordon and Whitchurch (2007) suggest that professional staff capable of this contextualisation undertake interpretive roles at the boundaries between academic work, internal constituencies and external partners. In doing so they undertake what might be described as *quasi-academic* work. This has led not only to greater diversity within the workforce but also to a blurring of the traditional divisions between academic and professional staff. Similarly, in his discussion of academic capitalism, Rhoades (2005) points to the rise of non-faculty professionals – he calls them “managerial professionals” – who conduct some academic work and affect such work.

In Japan, blurring of the boundaries can be observed particularly in those national universities that have developed diverse academic support centres and other specialised services in academic-related and research support areas, such as counselling, placement, career development, international students, and university-industry co-operation. In these centres and specialised services (“academic support centres”), professional staff are being employed mostly as academic staff, with the title of professor, associate-professor or lecturer, even though generally they do not or are not expected to perform traditional academic duties – teaching and research. However, in some universities, particularly private universities, this professionalisation can also be observed among non-academic staff, where boundaries between academic and non-academic staff are relatively maintained.

It should be noted, though, that blurring of the boundaries is not supported by all studies. Conway (1998), for example, criticises suggestions of boundary blurring as ignoring the very different natures of work undertaken by the two groups and the different skills and knowledge required for each. She suggests that those boundaries were never clear and that it is the values of both groups that are converging rather than their work. As reported by Gornitzka and Larsen (2004), Norwegian administrative staff point to rather clear boundaries between their role and the role of the academic leaders. However, while these arguments focus on university management, blurring has been observed most often on borders between academic and administrative tasks as shown in the case of Japanese universities. Dobson and Conway (2003) argue that, recognising the appropriateness of the blurring argument for the “new professionals”, it is debatable that this argument can or should be applied

universally across all administrative work.

The next section, after a brief presentation of relevant government policies, discusses academic support functions in Japanese universities, with an emphasis on professional staff in academic support centres.

## **2. Professionalisation of academic support functions in Japanese universities**

*Policy recommendations for promoting professionalisation* One of the earliest proposals in the post-war period with respect to professionalisation of functional areas in universities was one made by an expert group of American student services practitioners, commissioned by the US-Japan bilateral agreement. In 1952, the group, headed by Wesley P. Lloyd, recommended to the Japanese government a wide range of measures to promote student services. The recommended measures included provision of professionally trained staff in student services, with status and salary in keeping with their significant responsibilities, which should be classified as educational rather than as clerical in nature. Furthermore, the group recognised that it was appropriate for staff members in the student services offices to carry teaching responsibilities, though those involved in major student services should devote only a minor amount of time to regular teaching assignments (Lloyd, 1953).

The recommendations were subsequently studied by the Student Welfare Council (*Gakutokoseishingikai*) of the Ministry of Education (*Monbusho*). In 1958, the Council presented to the Minister a report “Organisation of Student Services in Universities and Improvement of their Administration” for developing student services in Japanese universities, which included establishment of a personnel system that would allow universities to recruit and reward the professional staff. The report defined a personnel system for professional staff including the required competencies, selection and promotion criteria, and reward systems; it suggested creating a new education professional status in addition to that of teaching staff. However, the Council recognised both the incompatibility of a US-like professional personnel system with the Japanese traditional personnel system and the underprofessionalisation of student services in Japan. Accordingly, the Council proposed providing professional staff in student services with an academic rank (professor, associate professor, *etc.*), and the idea of a non-academic professional staff was not adopted. Following the disruptions caused by student organisations around 1970, student services were considerably re-oriented in the direction of controlling student activities rather than helping them, and their professionalisation was no longer on the agenda.

In the 1980s, in the face of the massification of higher education and other socio-economic challenges, the National Council on Educational Reform (*Rinjikyokushingikai*), an advisory body to the Prime Minister, stressed the need for professionalising managerial functions of universities in its series of recommendations for reforming the entire higher education system. The Ministry of Education, in consultation with the University Council (*Daigakushingikai*), established in 1987 on the recommendation of the National Council, proceeded with diverse reforms in the 1990s, and notably in

1991 with deregulatory measures such as the simplification of the Standards for the Establishment of Universities<sup>5</sup>. As a result, university autonomy was significantly enhanced: with each institution required to make decisions based on its own judgement, this demanded development of its managerial capability. The 1995 report of the University Council “Facilitation of University Management” called for revision and improvement of administrative organisations and enhancement of the partnership between academic and non-academic staff in addition to greater leadership by university presidents. Furthermore, the Council called for development of support functions and encouraged professionalisation of certain areas, including international affairs and admissions, in its 1998 report “A Vision of Universities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Reform Measures: To Be Distinctive Universities in a Competitive Environment.”

Moreover, a number of other recommendations were made on issues relevant to professionalisation of universities’ non-academic functions. The 1999 report of the Central Council for Education (*Chuokyoikushingikai*)<sup>6</sup> “Improving Articulation between Primary-Secondary Education and Higher Education” called for development of admissions offices staffed by professional admissions officers. The 2000 report of a ministerial panel of experts “Enrichment of Student Life in Universities – Development of Universities in Support of Students” (Hironaka Report) exhorted university administrators to switch their emphasis from a “teacher-centred university” to a “student-centred university”, and recommended a number of measures including collaboration between academic and non-academic staff, professionalisation of non-academic staff in student services, and recruitment of specialists (counsellors, career advisors, *etc.*) from outside the university. Other recommendations for professionalisation could be found in areas such as university-industry co-operation, information technology, and financial management.

As shown above, a significant number of proposals have been made with respect to professionalisation of non-academic functions. However, most of the proposals were not implemented, largely due to the structure of the personnel system and the traditional university culture. While recognising the need for non-academic staff with expertise in admissions, the second of these issues led the University Council’s report in 2000, “Improvement of University Admissions” to propose as interim measures, the development of an organisational structure in which academic and non-academic staff would co-operate, so as to minimise the resistance from teachers as well as acknowledgement of the time required to develop professional staff. On the other hand, the personnel system issue was particularly important in the national universities, where a civil servant regime applied.

One of the objectives of incorporation of the national universities carried out in 2004 was to

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<sup>5</sup> Before this reform, course subjects taught at undergraduate level were classified into four categories: liberal arts (including humanities, social sciences and natural sciences), special subject education, foreign languages (not less than two languages) and physical education and health: all universities were required to organise their programmes to accord with this schedule. After the deregulation, the only requirement of the standards is that of acquisition of a minimum total number of credits (124).

<sup>6</sup> An advisory board to the Minister of Education on overall educational policy. In 2001, in the process of the governmental reform, it integrated several specialised advisory bodies including the University Council.

introduce flexibility into the governance of universities, including human resources issues (Oba, 2005). The ministerial report on incorporation of the national universities (Study Team concerning the Transformation of National Universities into Independent Administrative Corporations, 2002) urged that the duties of clerical staff, beyond their administrative work, should not be limited to the support of education and research activities by academic staff. Rather they should actively participate in university management in collaboration with academic staff. Furthermore, by taking into account the expansion of job areas requiring a high degree of specialisation, it called for the creation of personnel systems to accord with this need for specialisation and for a review of recruitment and development of non-academic staff. After incorporation, neither academic nor non-academic staff have civil servant status, and the national universities are able to recruit non-academic staff without having to hold a national civil service examination. Some universities have recruited specialists for managerial posts requiring specialised knowledge and skills from outside the universities, but the number of advertised non-academic positions remains limited. It should be noted though that, particularly in the larger national universities, numerous specialists have been recruited as academic staff and often placed in diverse academic support centres. This issue is discussed in the next section.

### ***Academic support centres and their staff***

Development of academic support centres Institutional efforts typically observed for quality assurance systems for improving student learning include such activities as programme reforms (vocationalisation, career education, *etc.*), academic staff development, teaching evaluation and development of learning support systems. Some Japanese universities, especially the larger national universities, have developed academic support centres, such as those for career education, international students and education research. These developments are in accord with the repeated recommendations of policy papers discussed above.

According to a survey conducted in 2006 (RIHE, 2007)<sup>7</sup>, academic support centres have been or are being established in nearly two-thirds of universities. The centres are more frequently developed in national universities than in local public and private universities, and are particularly well developed in large comprehensive and multidisciplinary universities (category C1, C2 and M1). Professionalisation of academic support functions is being developed principally in the larger universities that are more likely to have additional resources at their disposal.

These centres have different missions, ranging from academic staff development to general education.<sup>8</sup> Some are large multifunctional centres, and others are small and mono-functional. In

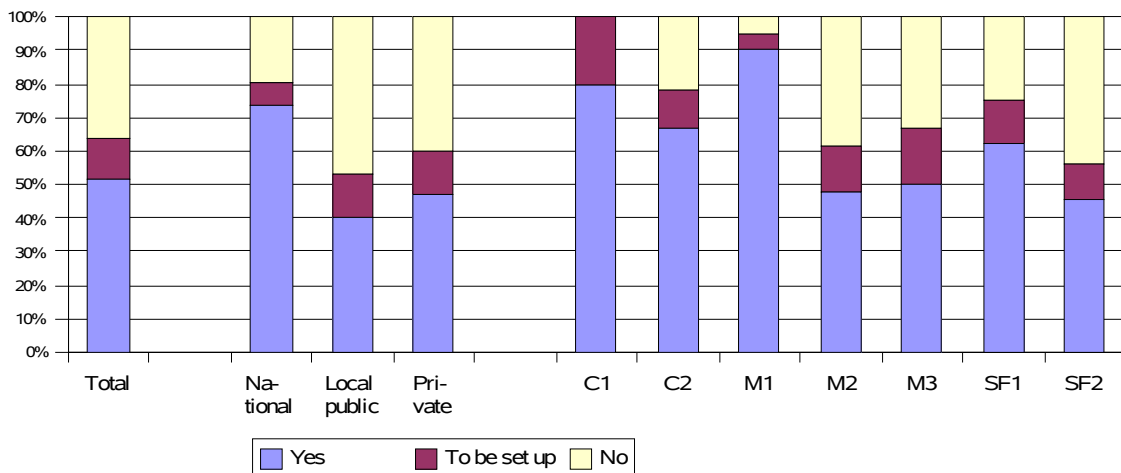
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<sup>7</sup> A questionnaire was sent to all universities at three levels of academic administrators (presidents, faculty deans and department heads). Their responses were classified by type of control (national, local public and private) as well as by category (see Annex).

<sup>8</sup> General education is not necessarily a function of academic support centres in the strict sense of the word. But centres in charge of general education are most often responsible for campus-wide academic support activities. In this article, the function of general education is not addressed apart from the survey results.



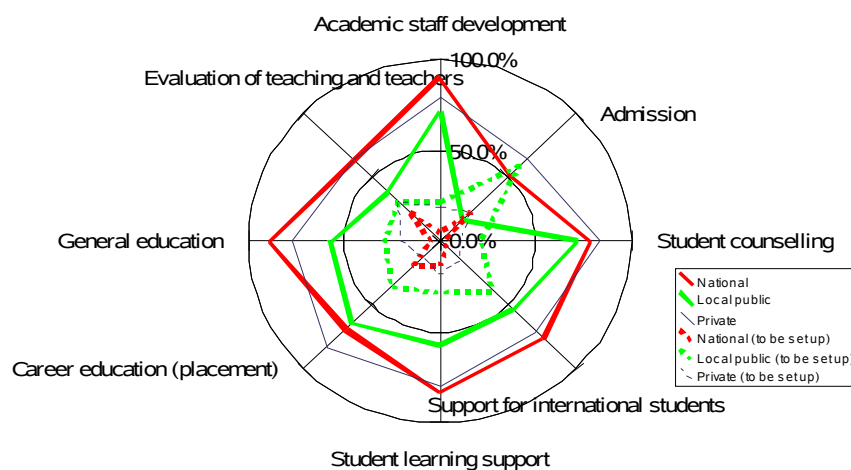
**Figure 1. Establishment of academic support centres by type of control and by category**



Note: N=270  
Source: RIHE (2007)

local public universities, centres have fewer functions than those of national and private universities.<sup>9</sup> Staff development and general education functions are most developed in the national universities, and the career education (placement) function in private universities, which have been more attentive to the employment of their graduates than the national and local public universities. However, many local public universities plan to develop centres, and to a lesser extent so do the national and private universities particularly in regard to the currently less developed functions. As a whole, centres at all three types of universities will progress in order to fulfil all the functions addressed in the survey.

**Figure 2. Functions assigned to academic support centres**



Note: N=261  
Source: RIHE (2007)

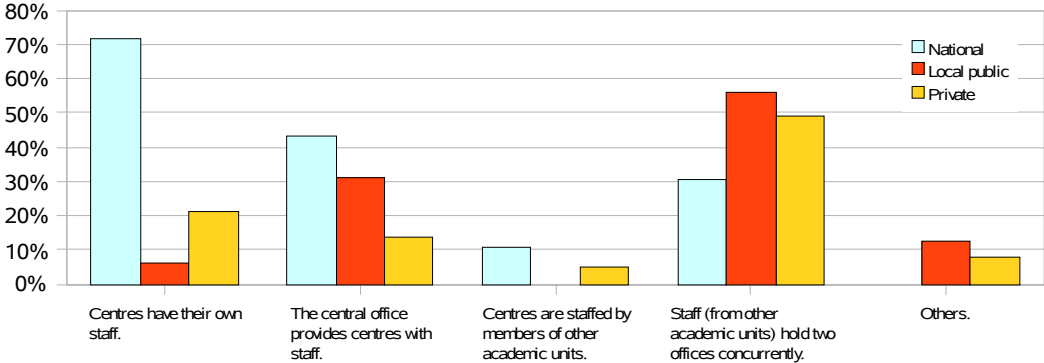
### Staff in centres

*Staff allocation* Of the centres identified in the survey, most of those in the national universities

<sup>9</sup> Centres in a university are addressed as a whole in this article. The functions referred to here are those performed by all relevant centres in a university.

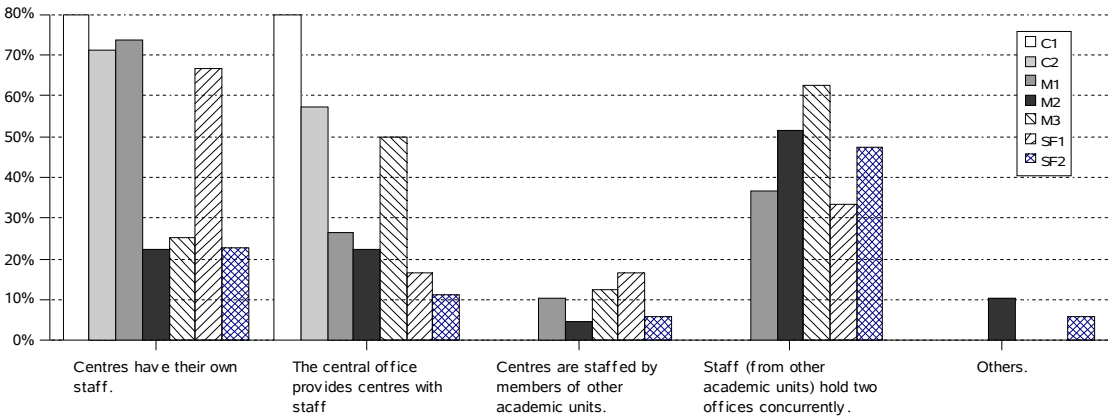
have their own professional staff; in the local public and private institutions they tend to rely heavily on other academic units for staff to keep them running (Figure 3). When analysing the staffing by category (Figure 4), centres in the larger comprehensive/multidisciplinary universities are seen to have their own staff or those allocated by the central office. Many other universities seem to have much difficulty in staffing their centres.

**Figure 3. Staffing (professional) of academic support centres by type of control**



Note: N=270 (multiple answers allowed)  
Source : RIHE (2007)

**Figure 4. Staffing (professional) of academic support centres by category**



Note: N=270 (multiple answers allowed)  
Source : RIHE (2007)

*Professional staff* Table 1 shows the situation in regard to professional staff (specialists) in student services. Apart from counselling and career support, over half of the universities have no professional staff, and recruitment from outside – either as academic staff or as non-academic staff – is not common. Specialists coming from outside the universities are most often found in counselling, and this is the only functional area in the survey in which professional staff from outside outnumber those developed inside. The proportion of specialist professional staff employed as academics is much higher in the national universities than in local public and private universities.

In the future directions (Table 3), very few universities intend to reduce recruitment of specialists

from outside, but well over half the universities (58-80%) have no intention of changing their current practice. With a limited number of universities intending to develop specialists internally, it seems that professionalisation will grow only gradually.

**Table 1. Professional staff in student services (current state)**

	Instructional support	Learning support	Student life support	Counselling	Career support
Employ specialists from outside as non-academics	9	6	10	128	60
Employ specialists from outside as academics	7	10	1	43	17
Develop specialists inside the university	87	86	102	76	93
No specialists in the university	140	142	128	36	93
Total	243	244	241	283	263

Note: N=243 (multiple answers allowed)  
Source: Onuki (2007)

**Table 2. Professional staff in student services by type of universities (current state)**

	National universities	Local public universities	Private universities
Employ specialists from outside as non-academics		27	34
Employ specialists from outside as academics		31	4
Develop specialists inside the university		37	33
No specialists in the university		111	101
% of academics among professional staff		33%	6%
			8%

Note: N=243 (multiple answers allowed)  
Source: Onuki (2007).

**Table 3 Professional staff in student services (future directions)**

	Instructional support	Learning support	Student life support	Counselling	Career support
Employment from outside will increase.	8	12	2	56	51
Employment from outside will decrease.	0	1	1	2	3
Develop specialists inside the university.	50	43	40	27	44
No change is expected.	155	160	168	143	134
Total	213	216	211	228	232

Note: N=243 (multiple answers allowed)  
Source: Onuki (2007).

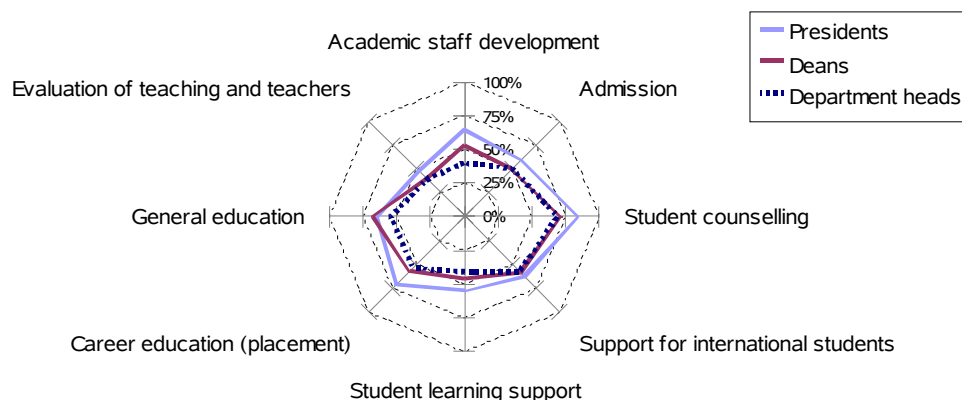
In the national universities as a whole, many of the professional staff recruited externally and located in the centres studied in the survey have academic rank. This is partially (but importantly) due

to the fact that, before incorporation, the national universities could only employ non-academic staff – professional or not – who were qualified in the national public service examination. In addition, for certain kinds of works, academic rank was regarded as necessary for working with other academic staff, and as providing a preferable condition for recruitment of specialists externally.

**Issues and challenges** Centres discussed in the previous sections are not always highly regarded in the universities and indeed are often looked upon with scepticism. As is clear, many of the centres are faced with staffing problems. Centres and the traditional academic units compete for ever decreasing resources, and the criteria appropriate to the centres differ to a considerable degree from those of the academic units, which often cause tensions inside the universities.

Attitudes to the centres are quite divergent among the different groups of decision-makers. Figure 5 shows the responses to the survey expressed by the three levels of academic administrators. The satisfaction shown by presidents is always superior to that of department heads, with that of deans being situated generally in the middle. The gap between the presidents and the department heads is the largest concerning academic staff development (65% against 40%). From these responses, there seems to be little consensus on the effectiveness (and probably the *raison d'être* itself) of centres on each campus. Centres – often set up on the initiative of the presidents – compete with traditional academic units in universities and are supported only by the central authorities; if the president changes, centres are likely to lose support for their existence.

**Figure 5. Effectiveness of the centres, as evaluated by three levels of academic administrators**



Notes: N=141-152 (Presidents)/378-402 (Deans)/1332-1363 (Department heads)

Underevaluation of centres by basic academic units may derive from the perceived administrative nature of their activities, many of which are characterised by normative approaches. It seems that, although their professional staff may be classified as academics, the mode of their activities generally differs from that of the traditional academic units. This illustrates the way that the traditional division between academics and non-academics and between academic tasks and administrative tasks has now become an oversimplification, as Askling (2001) reports in her study of special support units in

Swedish universities, which are often staffed with highly specialised academics. The underevaluation can also be interpreted as arising from tensions between centres and academic units caused by competition for resources. As well as the administrative nature of the centres' activities, Askling identifies tensions between special support units and other academic units in her study cited above.

Moreover, the values developed by the centres do not seem to converge with those of the academic units. Conversely, academics in the centres seem to develop their own set of values, as Becher and Kogan (1992) argue in terms of non-academic administrators. Values shared by the centres seem much closer to those of the central authorities and administrative staff – identification with the institution, responsiveness to needs of society, *etc.* – than those shared by the traditional academic units. Under the new quality assurance systems, institutions have largely been released from state regulations, but the academic staff are more exposed to various pressures as part of institutional management and governance. In this context centres are often looked upon as management advocates, or at least as channels through which these pressures are exerted.

Furthermore, centres compete not only with traditional academic units but also with administrative units for resources. The personnel division manager in a national university expressed a concern that the university could not fill the positions of retiring non-academic staff, after distributing the entire centrally administrated staff quota to its centres.<sup>10</sup> In the future, competition is likely to be harsher in an environment where enrolments of 18-year olds and block grant allocations by government – predominantly used for the salary – are declining. The situation of centres, being neither academic nor administrative by nature, remains very unstable in an environment of blurring academic and non-academic staff and their activities.

### **3. Conclusion**

Regardless of the differences that exist among national systems, HEIs are facing similar challenges, such as massification, globalisation and marketisation, which have prompted the development of quality assurance systems, changing the role of the state and enhancing the autonomy and responsibility of HEIs. To meet with these challenges, HEIs have diversified their workforce, by professionalising managerial and academic support functions in order to enhance their managerial capability and through activities in support of academics and students, entailing a blurring of boundaries between academic and non-academic staff.

In Japanese universities, extended discussion of professionalisation of non-academic functions has resulted in numerous recommendations to the government. Nevertheless, most of the recommendations have not been implemented, principally due to the persistence of a binary division of staff – academic and non-academic – supported by the traditional university culture and a rigid personnel system, particularly in the national universities.

However, since the 1990s, in the face of the massification and other increasingly complex socio-

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<sup>10</sup> According to an interview in August 2007.

economic challenges, the Japanese government has proceeded with deregulation and developed a quality assurance system, though the start of the latter lagged far behind the former. These changes have enhanced the autonomy and responsibility of HEIs and significantly modified their management mode. The new responsibilities of HEIs involve a complexity of tasks as well as calling for diverse expertise in management and academic support activities, which has brought about the development of multiple centres and other services staffed by specialists, particularly in national universities.

These changes have blurred the traditional binary division of tasks and staff – academic and non-academic. Many of the professional staff positions in academic support areas are filled with people holding academic rank, particularly in the national universities. Possession of an academic rank may be helpful when they work with other academic staff, although their values differ; but in an environment of declining government resources and a scarcity of new positions, tensions arise over differences of values and resource allocation not only with traditional academic units but also with the secretariat.

Finally, in Japanese universities, development of professionalisation of non-academic staff has been largely neglected, although many recommendations and policy papers have endorsed it. In view of the professionalisation of tasks by staffing specialists holding academic rank in some academic support centres, it would seem that professionalisation of non-academic functions might have been – in a sense irregularly – proceeding particularly in national universities where diverse centres have been developed. As suggested by numerous policy papers, it is indispensable that Japanese universities develop professional staff – such as “administrative managers”<sup>11</sup> (Whitchurch, 2004) and “managerial professionals” (Rhoades, 2005) – backed by specialised knowledge and skills as well as experience. Professionalisation of non-academic staff is all the more necessary given that administrative restructuring is part of a much larger societal change – development of quality assurance is a derivative of it – that has to do with the professionalisation of the work force in general (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). Yet such change will create tensions, the resolution of which will affect the success of an HEI. Although these new professional staff’s manifest function remains that of support or advice, as shown by Henkel (2002), they are also regarded as change agents in what had been accepted as uncontested academic territory. Therefore, what is needed now is to recognise the complementarity of both cultures, academic and administrative regardless of the possibility of their convergence, and by creating shared commitments, assure collaboration between staff, irrespective of the titles they hold.

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<sup>11</sup>Staff who do not hold academic posts, but who have responsibility for functions such as student services, finance, human resources, estates, enterprise and external relations.

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## Annex

### University Categorisation used in the RIHE survey (RIHE, 2007)

Category	Description	Number
Comprehensive university 1 (C1)	Former imperial university	7
Comprehensive university 2 (C2)	Comprehensive university, founded on the core of a university under the old system	14
Multidisciplinary university 1 (M1)	Multidisciplinary university with a faculty of medicine, not having its origin in a university under the old system	34
Multidisciplinary university 2 (M2)	University with at least two faculties without faculty of medicine, not having its origin in a university under the old system	309
Multidisciplinary university 3 (M3)	Multidisciplinary university founded on the core of a university under the old system, without faculty of medicine	22
Single-faculty institution 1 (SF1)	Single-faculty institution (medicine)	25
Single-faculty institution 2 (SF2)	Single-faculty institution (apart from medicine)	289