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Recently, many Japanese universities have introduced first-year seminars (FYS) to allow students to adjust smoothly to college life. This development accelerated after the late 1990s for several reasons. First, Japan has moved from the “massification” to the “post-massification” stage. Massification was defined as the second stage of a developmental model of higher education by Martin Trow. He characterized elite higher education as a stage when less than 15 percent of a specific age group was enrolled in higher education institutions and mass higher education as a stage when 15 percent to 50 percent of the age group entered higher education institutions. Post-massification, and so-called universal higher education, are stages where more than 50 percent of the age group has access to higher education (1974). With 49.9 percent of recent high school graduates enrolling in higher education in 2003, Japan has entered the post-massification phase of higher education (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology [MEXT], 2004).

In this situation, almost all students who desire to enter university will be able to gain admission, which explicitly implies that students with less preparation for university studies, in terms of basic knowledge, study skills, and motivation, will enter higher education. In parallel with the move to post-massification, a lower level of university students will gradually become apparent.

Second, Japan has faced a rapid decrease in 18 years of student population. This demographic change becomes the force to transform higher education institutions in Japan. In concrete, less academically prepared and not well matured students become to be able to access the higher education institutions. However, many higher education institutions can not help accepting these less prepared students in a decreased 18 years of student population. Thus, the number of higher education institutions offering remedial courses and first-year seminars in their curriculum is increasing.

In addition to changes concurrent with post-massification, a second set of changes is occurring in Japanese higher education. A reform movement has emerged in Japan, which is reflected in new MEXT policies. The reform is economic-centered, market-conscious, and influenced by a government policy shift toward deregulation, reflecting governmental concerns about global competition in the 21st century and Japan's ability to cope with a rapidly aging society that has a declining birth rate. In an aging society with a declining birth rate, financial loss and retrenchment will become more serious. After the 1980s, a shift to policies based on neo-liberalism has been observed worldwide. Then, what kind of impact do neo-liberal policies make on

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the higher education sector? In the framework of neo-liberalism, education and research are regarded as indispensable for national development. Although less public money is available for the total education sector, the budget tends to be concentrated on technology, science, and market-related fields. At the same time, serious competition as a result of globalization causes research in higher education institutions to shift toward science and technology, becoming more sensitive to industrial policy and intellectual property strategies (Slaughter, 1998). In other words, higher education institutions must simultaneously pursue the functions of cultivating elites and of improving the outcome of the mass of students. Thus, the need for strong accountability has emerged, and attention is being given to broad social and economic rationalization of university functions (Van Vaught & Westerjeojden, 1994).

Van Vught and Westerjeojden explain the concerns of governments and other interest groups as being concerns about accountability (1994), which are described by Berdahl and McConnell as being answerable to various constituencies for a responsible performance (1994). Thus, accountability becomes a concept involving evaluation and measurement of performance, and the monitoring of all the functions of a university (Alboronoz, 1996). That is, the general public becomes more concerned with higher education institutions, and seeks educational outcomes and research outcomes. Moreover, the public at large will start to express its criticism when it is not satisfied with the effectiveness and the performance of a higher education institution. In other words, education outcomes are more important for securing quality and for proving institutional accountability (1997).

Then, what is happening in Japanese higher education and what are the impacts of the emergence of the accountability issue and of the progression of massification? Environmental changes already explained are forcing Japanese higher education institutions to pay much more attention to teaching and learning and to students' learning outcomes. However, it is often suggested that a strong research-oriented academic culture is observed in Japanese universities and this culture has long circumvented substantive improvement of teaching.

In 1992-1993, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching conducted an international survey of the academic profession in 14 countries. In Japan it revealed that most professors viewed themselves as researchers rather than as teachers (Arimoto & Ehara, 1996). Based on this survey, Ehara (1998) identified three types of faculty. He divided the thirteen countries and one region selected for the survey into three types: a Latin-American model, an Anglo-American model, and a German model. Teaching was ranked high by faculties in countries of the Latin-American model, including Chile, Mexico, Brazil, and Russia. Research activities were ranked high by faculties of the German model, including Israel, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Japan. The Anglo-American faculties were located between the Latin American and German models in that they ranked both research and teaching activities as high. In Japanese universities, only 27.5 percent of the faculty participating in the survey assigned a high rank to teaching activities a proportion that ranked as second-to-last among the thirteen countries. Such a research-oriented academic culture, as observed in Japanese universities, has long circumvented substantive efforts to improve teaching.

To address the need for more attention to teaching in Japanese institutions of higher education, MEXT provided competitive grants to encourage efforts to transform university cultures into those of more learning-centered institutions. The increased attention on effective teaching has forced even research-centered universities to focus more on learning and teaching. Thus, after the year 2000, while there still remains a small percentage of research-centered universities that are highly competitive worldwide, the majority of four-year universities have been forced to become more learning-and teaching-centered.

These environmental changes in Japanese higher education institutions are well documented. What is not so well known is how institutions of higher education in Japan are reacting and adjusting to these new conditions. To answer that question, a study was undertaken in 2001 to investigate the present status of first-year seminars in Japanese private universities. The purposes of this paper are to analyze the present condition of first-year seminars in Japan under the rapidly changing circumstances surrounding higher education institutions and to examine the structural problems concerning first-year seminars in Japan. Then, what about the situation in the United States, which has a long history of first-year seminars and faces accountability issues as well? Are there many differences in the structure of first-year seminars between the two countries and in the effectiveness of students learning? To explore such questions, I conducted a comparable survey of all US four-year universities in 2002. This paper offers a comparative analysis of the Japanese and US first-year seminars and students.

Learning and First-year Seminars

The issue of student learning has not emerged in a vacuum. It is closely associated with the progression of massification and accountability issues. Introduction of first-year seminars seems to have close connections with these issues. First-year seminars, which originally developed in the United States in the early 20th century and were popularized in the 1980s, are evaluated for their function as a motive force for teaching reform and improving the retention rate (Yamada, 2004). Gardner *et al.* (2001) identify eight factors that affected the evaluation of the first-year experiences of college students. These factors include (1) tax payers' reluctance to tolerate continuing increases in higher education expenditures; (2) fund providers' demands to raise the productivity of students; (3) pressures to raise admission standards; (4) pressure to redistribute more students to the less costly two-year sector; (5) pressure to teach more students via distance education to reduce costs; (6) pressure to shorten time-to-degree completion; (7) pressure to provide remedial education; and (8) the emergence of serious competition with the private for-profit sector. These factors are recognized as symptoms of accountability and they have forced higher education institutions to shift direction from research to teaching.

A survey conducted by the National Resource Center for First-Year Experience & Students in Transition, in the University of South Carolina, indicated that first-year seminars supported a smooth transition for students entering college life. Upcraft *et al.* suggest that freshman success can be defined in six aspects: developing

academic and intellectual competence, establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, developing identity, deciding on a career and life-style, maintaining personal health and wellness, and developing an integrated philosophy of life (1989). Thus, the success of first-year students has meaning beyond earning a good grade point average. Several researchers have also suggested that first-year students taking first-year seminars have achieved a higher retention rate from first to second year (Fidler & Hunter, 1989). In the United States, first-year seminars have steadily developed to become indispensable, and attain a much higher priority for policy-makers, fund providers, rank-and-file faculty and administrators (Upcraft, *et al.*, 2005). Further, Upcraft *et al.* point out that credible assessment studies have emerged showing the efficacy of the programs in assisting first-year students' success (2005).

On the other hand, until recently, Japanese higher education institutions have not developed first-year seminars or paid much attention to the deterioration of students' academic standards and lack of motivation. One of the reasons for the delayed interest in the efficacy of first-year seminars is associated with Japanese faculty's research-oriented culture as indicated above. However, in general, the Japanese approach toward learning outcomes has been different from that of the United States. Learning outcomes can be measured on the basis of "external effects" referring to efficacy outside the formal educational system, or "internal effects," also called "college impact," showing the learning outcome of students through the quality of pedagogy and student involvement. A theory of college impact concentrates not on any individual process of students' growth; rather, it focuses on the contexts in which a student acts and thinks: institutional structures, policies, programs, and services; and on the attitudes, values, and behaviors of others in institutional environments (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Many theorists, exemplified by Astin, proposed models of college impact focusing on student characteristics, institutional environments, and learning outcomes. Thus, the development of first-year seminars in the United States is strongly supported by an accumulation of research on college impact (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

In contrast, Japanese society has long considered colleges and universities as "gatekeepers" conferring social status, occupation, and benefits through the screening process of college entry. Maruyama studied Japanese students' occupational aspirations and showed that students in highly selective universities had higher occupational aspirations and higher motivation for learning than those in less selective universities (1981). Matsushige *et al.* demonstrated that graduates of highly selective national universities gained higher salaries (2004). Thus, the effect of social "charters" in Japan has been closely associated with the prestige of colleges and universities. This academic research trend has delayed inquiries into first-year seminars in Japan. Thus, there are only a small number of studies regarding first-year seminars in Japan and most of them are hardly more than descriptive reports.

Yamada conducted the first Japanese survey for first-year seminars in 1998¹⁾, showing that more private universities in Japan required first-year seminars than national and public universities. At that time, private universities were more affected by the post-massification phenomenon than national or public universities because private universities had played a significant role in accepting more diverse student populations than

those in the national or public sectors. The study revealed that learning ability, learning motivation, and note-taking skills of four-year university and college students had declined over the preceding five years. For this reason, universities and colleges reported that they recognized a need to deal with their students' lack of readiness for higher education. Private universities reported the greatest level of concern about the deterioration of student scholastic attainment, motivation, and social skills. The survey results also revealed a lack of agreement on a common definition of first-year seminars in Japan. While some faculties and departments defined a first-year seminar as remedial education, others considered it to be a regular component of the first-year curriculum. This confusion was apparent in the array of course content and pedagogy applied to first-year seminars in Japanese universities. However, after 1998, the speed at which first-year seminars in Japan spread became significant and their content and the pedagogy became clearer. This raises new questions. It seems that first-year seminars in Japan were not developed indigenously; rather, many Japanese higher education institutions imported an American model of first-year seminars. Then, are there any commonalities or differences in contents and pedagogy of first-year seminars between the two countries? Is there any effect of first-year seminars on students' academic as well as social and life skills in both countries?

Method

Procedures

A survey of 1,170 deans and academic provosts at four-year Japanese universities was conducted. The survey instrument included items related to the importance of the contents of first-year seminars, impression of students, importance of assistance for students, and institutional data. Six hundred and thirty six deans and academic provosts responded²⁾. For most items a five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate responses. To permit a comparative analysis between Japan and the United States, the same questionnaire³⁾ was sent to 1358 US four-year universities one year later than the survey to Japanese universities. Four hundred and sixty three academic provosts of universities responded to the survey⁴⁾.

Framework of Analysis

Although both questionnaires consisted of the same items and content, the framework for analysis could not be controlled in the same way. Two analytical procedures were used. One way was to compare the overall responses from both countries. Secondly, I controlled for the type of universities based on the classifications of universities generally used in each country. For US universities, I used the Carnegie Classification. This was not applicable to samples of Japanese universities and for them I used the deviation value widely used in Japan⁵⁾. Although these two frameworks for analysis differ and this limits the comparative analysis, this study will advance comparative study of comprehensive first-year seminars in both countries in the absence of any other empirical comparative studies.

Differences of the Higher Education Systems in the Two Countries

The differences of the higher education systems in the two countries limit a true comparative questionnaire survey and analysis. While Japanese students select their majors at the time of entrance to college, most American students decide on their majors after studying general education in the lower division. This difference, of early decision by Japanese students and late decision by American students, impacts on the questionnaire surveys' delivery procedures in three aspects. While American universities are highly centralized in the undergraduate structure, Japanese universities are highly decentralized through being departmentally based. So, questionnaires were sent to each department in Japanese universities, while they were sent to an academic provost at each American institution. Second, while retention is a significant factor for American institutions, this term has little significance for Japanese universities, which generally keep a high retention rate. Third, while the five-year graduation rate has become more common than the four-year graduation rate in American universities, a four-year graduation rate is the general standard in Japanese universities. It is essential to recognize the existence of these structural differences in the higher education systems when statistical analyses are conducted.

Definition of First-year Seminars and Research Questions

Both surveys explicitly defined four types of first-year seminars. The four categories included: (1) remedial education covering high-school level educational contents; (2) study skills such as report writing, reading comprehension, and IT skills; (3) student skills such as social skills, manners, and general knowledge required for university success; and, (4) transition toward majors including general and specialized knowledge in the major.

The first three types of first-year seminars are generally found in American universities, where the first-year program movement began. The fourth type is not generally found there but is common in Japan. Most first-year students in the United States are required to study general education in the lower division before starting their study in the major. In Japan, most first-year students enter universities directly into a major or specific department to begin immediate study in their area of specialization. The importance of the major department has increased since the deregulation of universities in Japan in 1991. It was predicted that this would lead to the contents of Japanese first-year seminars often being organized to teach basic knowledge in the major. The data are analyzed on the premise of this structural difference between US and Japanese universities.

The research format focuses on three questions.

1. What are commonalities and differences between first-year seminars in the United States and Japan?
In particular, what are the common elements of first-year seminar contents in both countries?
2. Do the observations of deans and provosts of Japanese universities confirm anecdotal reports of deteriorating student academic performance and motivation?
3. What are the elements affecting first-year seminars? Are there any differences between the two countries?

Results

Descriptive Statistics of Japanese and American Universities

The average four-year graduation rate of Japanese universities is 83.15%, which is rather high. The average four-year graduation rate based on type of universities is as follows: highly-selective, 81.49%; selective, 84.65%; moderate, 84.10%; non-selective, 80.53%; and open-admission, 81.32%. A certain tendency can be observed in Japanese universities. Students of non-selective and highly selective universities tend to graduate late. Although it is often pointed out that the four-year graduation rate in Japanese universities has been declining, the data shows that the four-year graduation rate still functions as an effective average graduation rate in Japanese universities in general.

On the other hand, the average four-year graduation rate of American universities is 46.19% and the average five-year graduation rate is 54.89%. A breakdown of the four-year graduation rate based on the Carnegie Classification, 2000, is as follows: Doctoral/research universities-extensive, 41.14%; Doctoral/research universities-intensive, 35.80%; Master's comprehensive colleges and universities I, 41.73%; Master's comprehensive colleges and universities II, 54.45%; Baccalaureate colleges-liberal arts, 62.22%; and Baccalaureate colleges-general, 42.11%. Five-year graduation appears to have become more common than four-year graduation in most American universities.

Since the concept of retention is not used in Japanese universities, I only asked the question about the retention rate (from 1st to 2nd year) of American universities. The average retention rate of American universities is 75.96% and the breakdown is as follows: Doctoral/research universities-extensive, 84.66%; Doctoral/research universities-intensive, 75.35%; Master's comprehensive colleges and universities I, 74.43%; Master's comprehensive colleges and universities II, 74.26%; Baccalaureate colleges-liberal arts, 81.98%; and Baccalaureate colleges-general, 69.7%. While higher retention rates can be maintained in doctoral/research universities-extensive and baccalaureate colleges-liberal arts, the rate in baccalaureate colleges-general is relatively low.

Respondents in Japanese universities reported the institution's current status and future plans in developing first-year seminars. Most universities, namely, 80.9% (511), offered FYS as a "regular" class in the curriculum, while 9.5% (60) responded that they did not currently offer FYS, but have already decided to introduce them in the near future, and 9.6% (61) answered that they would not introduce FYS. In particular, open-admission type of universities showed the highest extent (90.3%) of introducing first-year seminars. On the other hand, more than 10% of highly-selective and selective universities answered that they did not plan to introduce first-year seminars in the future.

On average, while 83.4% of American universities offered first-year seminars classes, less than 10% of universities replied that they did not intend to introduce first-year seminars, and there is less difference among types of universities for offering them.

Commonalties of FYS Contents

There seem to be both differences and similarities between Japanese universities and American universities for the assessment of the importance of contents taught in first-year seminars. To explore common components of first-year seminars in both countries, a factor analysis was conducted for all data collected from both countries using the principal components method and varimax rotation. Factor weights greater than .520 were included in factor constructs. Table 1 shows the weights greater than .520 for each of the analysis.

Table 1 Results of Factor Analysis of Contents of FYS

| Varimax Rotated Factor Solutions for Factor Scores>.52 | | | | |
|--|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Commonality Score |
| Variable | Academic Skills | Student Life and Social Skills | Internal Identity | |
| writing skills | 0.824 | | | 0.69 |
| oral communication skills | 0.803 | | | 0.354 |
| reading comprehension | 0.763 | | | 0.56 |
| logical thinking/problem solving skills | 0.709 | | | 0.652 |
| research/field work skills | 0.664 | | | 0.596 |
| data interpretation skills | 0.587 | | | 0.466 |
| library/reference skills | 0.542 | | | 0.538 |
| computing skills | 0.54 | | | 0.624 |
| note taking skills | | | 0.749 | 0.593 |
| career/major selection | | | 0.701 | 0.551 |
| time management | | | 0.684 | 0.614 |
| concentration/memorization skills | | | 0.671 | 0.584 |
| motivation for student success | | | 0.66 | 0.542 |
| social skills/manners | | | 0.655 | 0.526 |
| cooperative attitude | | | 0.799 | 0.708 |
| students' sense of affiliation | | | 0.788 | 0.748 |
| ethics and sense of responsibility as a citizen | | | 0.732 | 0.637 |
| self-esteem | | | 0.527 | 0.581 |
| Variance Explained | 3.97 | | 3.949 | 2.645 |
| Proportion of Variance Explained | 22.058 | | 21.939 | 14.697 |

Three factors were identified. The three-factor solution accounted for 58.69 % of the total variance. These three factors show the common elements of contents in both countries. The first factor is named "Academic Skills," and consists of issues related to writing, reading comprehension, logical thinking/problem solving, and others as necessary skills for university learning. The second factor, "Student Life and Social Skills," includes organizing learning habits such as note-taking skills, time management, career/major selection, motivation for student success, and social skills/manners. The third factor is named "Internal Identity" : it is related to the values and self-esteem that support students' adjustment to college.

T-test procedures for these factor scores yielded significant results for the factor "Academic Skills": $t(853)=11.042$ $p=0.000$; for the factor "Student Life and Social Skills": $t(853)=9.263$ $p=0.000$; and for the factor "Internal Identity": $t(853)=-14.206$ $p=0.000$. This suggests that Japanese universities highly emphasize the contents related to "Academic Skills" and "Student Life and Social Skills." On the contrary, American universities place less emphasis on contents associated with these factors. Instead, they highly emphasize the factor of "Internal Identity," including students' sense of affiliation, cooperative attitude, ethics and sense of

responsibility as citizens, and self-esteem.

To determine if the type of universities differed in the focus of first-year seminars, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using the deviation classification for Japanese universities and the Carnegie classification for American universities.

Statistical differences were found in three factors among Japanese universities. The factor of "Academic Skills": $F(527)=2.025$, $p<0.09$, the factor of "Student Life and Social Skills": $F(527)=3.794$, $p<0.005$, and the factor of "Internal Identity": $F(527)=2.60$ $p<0.03$. Highly-selective and open-admission type of universities emphasize "Academic Skills" more than other types of universities. Tukey post-hoc analyses revealed that the source of the significant group difference in "Student Life and Social Skills" was to be found between non-selective and open-admission type of universities as well as highly-selective universities. This suggests that highly-selective universities are not necessarily concerned with this factor. It appears that less selective universities have experienced a deterioration of "Student Life and Social Skills" and that the first-year seminars are one way for non-selective and open-admission universities to attempt to cope with the deterioration of fundamental learning habits and social skills among new students created by the post-massification phenomena described earlier.

Similarly, for the American universities, differences were also found in these three factors. The factor for "Academic Skills" showed $F(316)=5.142$, $p=0.000$, the factor for "Student Life and Social Skills", $F(316)=14.0$, $p=0.000$, and the factor for "Internal Identity", $F(316)=3.393$ $p<0.005$. Baccalaureate colleges-liberal arts are more likely to emphasize "Academic Skills" than doctoral/research universities-extensive, master's comprehensive colleges and universities I, master's comprehensive colleges and universities II and baccalaureate colleges-general. Baccalaureate colleges-liberal arts type emphasize "Student Life and Social Skills" contents less than to any other type of university. As the Tukey post-hoc analyses indicates, the baccalaureate colleges-general type emphasize the "Internal Identity" contents more than any other group of universities.

Evaluation of Students

The survey collected, on a 5-point scale, the opinions of the deans and provosts about how current students compare with students five years ago. For example, a question asked was "compared to five years ago, first-year students now have greater reading comprehension skills" (1 Strongly disagree, 2 Somewhat disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree, 5 Strongly agree).

As Figure 1 indicates, there is a big difference between Japanese and American universities. All items are statistically significant. While academic provosts in American universities judged that only "mathematical skills" and "foreign language skills" of students have deteriorated compared to five years ago, deans and academic provosts of Japanese universities felt that all abilities and skills of Japanese students had deteriorated. The t-value between Japanese and American universities is shown in Table 2. The Table shows the lower evaluation of students by Japanese universities compared to American universities.

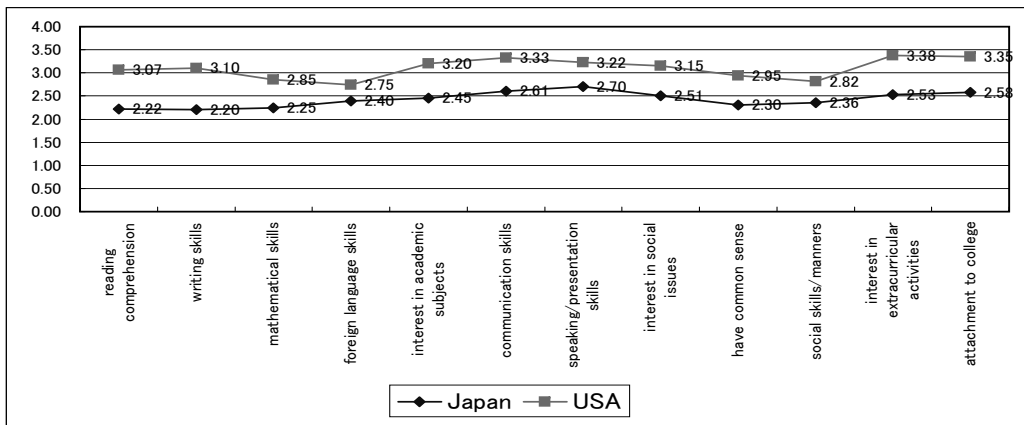


Figure 1. Evaluation of Students' Ability and Skills Compared to Five Years Ago

Table 2 Significant Group Differences between Japanese and American Universities on Items of Abilities and Skills

| Items of Abilities and Skills | Number | t | p |
|--|--------|---------|--------|
| reading comprehension | 930 | -15.076 | p=.000 |
| writing skills | 932 | -14.829 | p=.000 |
| mathematical skills | 924 | -10.222 | p=.000 |
| foreign language skills | 926 | -5.508 | p=.000 |
| interest in academic subjects | 929 | -13.181 | p=.000 |
| communication skills | 932 | -12.255 | p=.000 |
| speaking/presentation skills | 929 | -8.921 | p=.000 |
| interest in social issues | 931 | -11.556 | p=.000 |
| have common sense | 928 | -12.854 | p=.000 |
| social skills/manners | 930 | -8.442 | p=.000 |
| interest in extracurricular activities | 931 | -15.001 | p=.000 |
| attachment to college | 930 | -14.751 | p=.000 |

After factor loading, two factors were obtained. Factor weights greater than .570 were included in factor constructs. The two-factor solution accounted for 62.17% of the total variance. The first factor was named "Academic Skills Improvement" and the second factor was named "Student Life and Social Skills Improvement." I then compared the scores across types of universities in both Japan and the United States. There was no difference in the factor for "Student Life and Social Skills Improvement" among any of the types of Japanese universities. Every Japanese university, regardless of type, faced deterioration of this factor in these five years. However, there was a difference in the factor for "Academic Skills Improvement" ($F(578)=8.655, p=0.000$). As the Tukey post-hoc analysis indicates, only the highly-selective type of Japanese universities faced no deterioration of students' academic skills.

After a one-way ANOVA test, it was found that there was not much difference among American institutions in the factor for "Student Life and Social Skills Improvement." However, there was a difference in the factor for "Academic Skills Improvement." The Tukey post-hoc analysis suggested that improvement in this factor in the doctoral/research universities-extensive was the most significant.

The Effect of First-year Seminars

Next, data on variables were entered into a multiple regression analysis to determine the best predictors of variables for the effect of first-year seminars for all universities as well as for Japanese and American universities separately. After having examined the correlation coefficients, the variables entered into multiple regression were the contents of FYS, the degree of satisfaction toward FYS, and the year of introduction of FYS. Table 3 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), the standardized regression coefficients (β), R and adjusted R square.

When performing multiple regression analysis, I analyzed the data in three steps. First, I entered all the data and regressed; second, the data for American universities were regressed, after having included the Carnegie classification in the equation; then, the data for Japanese universities were regressed after inclusion of the deviation value classification. The results are shown in Table 3.

The results indicated that the degree of satisfaction for FYS, for the year of introducing FYS, for computing skills, and for concentration/memorization skills were significant determinants of the effect of FYS. Each of the predictor variables was significant at the .05 level. Combined, these predictors accounted for 50.5% of the variance in effect of FYS.

The regression model that examined the effect of first-year seminars in Japanese universities revealed that the degree of satisfaction for FYS, for concentration/memorization skills, computing skills, and year of introduction were significant and accounted for 35.8% of the total variance. However, the concentration/memorization skills functioned negatively for the effect of FYS.

For the American universities, the degree of satisfaction for FYS, for oral presentation skills, and year of introduction were significant and explained 78.2% of the total variance. The comparative result shows that the effect of first-year seminars in American universities is more significant than in Japanese universities.

Discussion

The survey results for both countries reflect some differences between Japan and the United States regarding education systems at all levels of culture, learning, and teaching styles. However, through the comparative survey, I found not only differences but also common elements for first-year seminars.

There were not many differences between the two countries regarding the introduction of first-year seminars. Also, it was confirmed that highly selective universities introduce first-year seminars less than other types of universities in both countries. In particular, Japanese universities have accelerated the speed of introduction of first-year seminars in the past decade. The reason for acceleration can be explained by the concern about the deterioration of academic attainments of Japanese students. The comparative data clearly show that while American universities have seen improvement of students' skills and abilities in many fields after introducing first-year seminars, improvements of students' skills and abilities could not be observed in Japanese universities.

Table 3 Results of Stepwise Regression on Effect on FYS

| Variable | All Universities | | | | Japanese Universities | | | | American Universities | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------|-------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------------|--------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------|--------------|--------|-------|
| | B* | β^{**} | t | p | Variable | B* | β^{**} | t | p | Variable | B* | β^{**} | t | p |
| Degree of Satisfaction | 0.69 | 0.694 | 22.111 | 0.000 | Degree of satisfaction | 0.552 | 0.558 | 11.954 | 0.000 | Degree of satisfaction | 0.87 | 0.868 | 25.957 | 0.000 |
| Year to introduce | -0.058 | -0.083 | -2.678 | 0.008 | Concentration /memorization skill | -0.102 | -0.195 | -4.141 | 0.000 | Oral presentation skills | 0.041 | 0.072 | 2.164 | 0.032 |
| Computing skill | 0.05 | 0.099 | 3.008 | 0.003 | Computing skill | 0.1 | 0.122 | 2.592 | 0.010 | Year to introduce | -0.051 | -0.066 | -2.007 | 0.046 |
| Concentration/memorization skill | -0.47 | -0.096 | -2.943 | 0.003 | Year to introduce | -0.63 | -0.096 | -2.059 | 0.040 | | | | | |
| R square | 0.505 | | | | 0.358 | | | | 0.782 | | | | | |
| Adjusted R square | 0.502 | | | | 0.349 | | | | 0.779 | | | | | |

*Unstandardized regression coefficient

**Standardized regression coefficient

This difference reflects the strategies toward learning and teaching issues and the structure of higher education institutions in both countries. First-year seminars in the United States have not emerged in a vacuum. Much accumulated research on college impact has led to improvements in learning and teaching in the United States. For instance, sociological as well as psychological approaches toward college impact research contributed to understanding the effects of teaching and students' involvement in the learning outcome. Development of students in the United States is regarded as the result of total college impact including the influence of faculty, students, extra-curricular activities, social life, and learning. This concept is reflected in the curriculum and teaching style of first-year seminars in the United States.

On the other hand, first-year seminars in Japan do not reflect enough accumulated research on learning and teaching. Especially since there is only a small amount of research on college students' development in Japan, the pedagogy of first-year seminars does not reflect a theory of students' learning.

Regarding the effects of first-year seminars, the degree of satisfaction becomes the strongest predictor in both countries. It suggests that the contents and pedagogy of first-year seminars lead to a high degree of student satisfaction so, in the long run, they can motivate students to learn. The effect of first-year seminars in several aspects can be seen more clearly in American universities than in Japanese universities. In the near future, to strengthen the effect of first-year seminars in Japan, further development of assessment systems to understand how these courses contribute to the curricular goals and to student development is required.

This paper did not show comparative analysis of the type of first-year seminars between Japan and the United States based on the survey results. However, the survey results clearly show the difference of type between two countries. Such difference seems to reflect the structural difference of higher education institutions in each country, so called Japanese early decision and American late decision for the majors. While Japanese first-year seminars are more discipline based, American first-year seminars are more orientation type to support student transition from high-school to college and thus the contents of the seminars are established to acquire more universal knowledge and skills. Therefore, the effect of first-year seminars in Japan may be considered in the framework of acquiring knowledge and skills for majors and on the contrary, the effect of first-year seminars in the United States may be analyzed from the view point of acquiring generic skills. The analysis for this subject is required to be examined in the next study.

Also, through comparative study, the issues related to teaching first-year seminars in Japanese universities have been clarified. Traditionally, Japanese faculty members have been highly research-oriented; however, in recent years, a number of significant university reforms have occurred with the purpose of transforming the academic culture into a more teaching-oriented one. Understanding how faculty members have developed FYS provides insight into the degree to which the reform efforts have changed faculty cultures. The results of the survey showed the difficulties in trying to change the faculty culture of Japanese higher education institutions⁶⁾. Although most faculty members recognize the changes in student academic culture, they are reluctant to transform their own culture into a more teaching-oriented one. Many faculty members are reluctant to be involved personally in first-year education and so have not been exposed to the alternative

teaching methods that are often used in first-year seminars. The deans reported, in open-ended responses, three categories of problems that make it difficult to engage faculty in first-year seminars. They reported that first-year seminars vary greatly in content and pedagogy, that a gap exists in teaching skills and motivation among faculty to participate, and that there is a lack of cooperation among faculty members. These issues clearly suggest that for first-year seminars to succeed in Japan, there is a need to develop greater agreement about the best content for first-year seminars, to further develop standards and guidelines for content and teaching, to place the courses better in the total curriculum, and to provide opportunities for faculty development.

Notes

- 1) The survey was conducted at 209 Japanese four-year universities and colleges in 1998 to get information about offering freshman seminars or remedial education courses. The final response rate was 54 percent. The participating departments were medical, engineering, economics, intercultural studies, and communication and language departments.
- 2) Respondents were as follows: highly selective, 81; selective, 188; moderate, 220; non-selective, 115; open admission, 32.
- 3) Questionnaire items were translated from Japanese to English and all items were reviewed by a Western researcher.
- 4) Respondents were as follows: Doctoral/research universities-extensive, 51; Doctoral/research universities-intensive, 32; Master's(comprehensive) colleges and universities I, 172; Master's (comprehensive) colleges and universities II, 26; Baccalaureate colleges-liberal arts, 75; Baccalaureate colleges-general, 78; Baccalaureate/associates colleges, 11.
- 5) The deviation value is used by high-school students and teachers for high school students to choose appropriate universities based on their practice entrance test scores. Major preparatory schools and educational service companies make their own deviation values open to the public. I used the deviation value released by the Yoyogi Seminar, one of Japan's major preparatory schools.
- 6) Open-ended opinions were collected and analyzed.

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日米の初年次教育の比較研究

—差異と共通点の分析—

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1990年代以降、学生を円滑に大学での学習や生活に移行させるという目的で、初年次教育を導入する日本の大学が増加している。初年次教育の導入の背景には高等教育の大衆化やアカウンタビリティが大いに関係していることはしばしば指摘されている。しかし、日本の大学における初年次教育の現状とその構造については初年次教育の日本の高等教育機関での歴史が浅いということもありあまりよく知られていない。筆者は2001年に日本の4年制高等教育機関を対象に初年に教育の包括的な調査を実施した。2002年には同一の質問内容で構成されている調査を全米の4年制高等教育機関を対象に実施した。

本稿では日米調査それぞれの結果を比較し、その差異と共通点を検討する。分析結果から日本の4年制大学の多くは近年の学生の学力や意欲の低下に対処するために初年次教育を導入していることが明らかになった。一方、米国においては大学の種別にかかわらず普遍的に初年次教育が導入されており、かつ導入されている効果として学生の学力および意欲の向上が見られることが明らかになった。初年次教育の教授内容に関しては、多くの共通点が検証された。

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