

Survival Strategies of a University for Teacher Education in the Transformation into an 'Independent Administrative Corporation': A Case of HUTE

Atsushi TAKEI
(Hyogo University of Teacher Education)

1. Introduction⁽¹⁾

The transformation into an 'Independent Administrative Corporation' of National Universities is one of the hottest issues in the discussion of Japanese higher education in recent years. Though much ink has been spent on pro's and con's of the government scheme, however, it's evaluation will be difficult without 'thick description' of the influences.

This paper provides a case illustration of the process of innovations for survival in a university, which is tackling the difficulties in the given condition. The paper is meant for profiling the ongoing process of a university innovation, and then, provides inputs for further discussion regarding higher education reform in Japan.

2. Characters of HUTE⁽²⁾

Hyogo University of Teacher Education (HUTE) was established in October 1978 as an institution embodying a new concept of teacher education. From the outset it has been offering a graduate program designed primarily to provide opportunities for in-service teachers undertaking highly specialized research and studies in the field of school education as well as an undergraduate program of pre-service training for prospective elementary school teachers. Through its undergraduate and graduate programs the University is endeavoring to improve teachers' qualities as a university for teachers that pursues both theoretical and practical aspects of education and as an open university committed to the advancement of school education. Before we come to the questions of survival strategies, a simple illustration of characteristics of HUTE will be of help to understand the nature of it's problems.

First the university places emphasis upon in-service training for M.Ed. students. Due to the mission of the university mentioned above, 60.8% of graduate program students in the academic year 2002, were those who have teaching experience. For this reason, the students' age distribution is higher and more diffused compared to the other universities.

Second, the location is far from city. HUTE is located 30km north of Kobe, 50km west of Osaka. Though it is not very far from big cities, the area is distinctive countryside surrounded by mountain for the traffic is not convenient. As a matter of fact, HUTE is the only university of education in Japan located in a town. Location-wise, the university is not very appealing for many students and it no doubt has a locational disadvantage when it has to compete with the other universities.

Third, teacher-pupil ratio is remarkably low in comparison with the other universities of education. The capacity of university is 300 for Master's Program and 160 for bachelors' program and 179 Faculty staff⁽³⁾. This is due to the scheme of national government embodying a new concept of teacher education.

Fourth, though this may be common to the other universities of education, the only department the university has (department of school education) consists of small "semi-departments," whose staff represent various fields of studies. Therefore, it is like aggregation of small bureaucratic sections, each of which has a different organizational culture.

3. Nature of the Problems

Considering the above characteristics, the change of the policy will have significant impact on the university. Following are the anticipated/observed influences of the transformation of the university into an 'Independent Administrative Corporation.'

First, the budget cut of the local government may result in reduction of delegation to the university, which again, might result in the reduction of funds from national government in case the university does not fulfill the enrolment capacity of master course. This is due to the government's budget distribution scheme where large portion is based on the number of graduate program enrolment.

Second, policies based on competitive principle deprive advantages the university used to receive from government in respect of the faculty staffs and the budget. Transformation into an 'Independent Administrative Corporation' makes the universities compete in the same condition as a principle though the geographical disadvantage is not going to be covered by some measure.

Third, because of certain characteristics of a university like covering vast area of education and the organizational culture mentioned above, is it difficult to align the organization with the common purpose and to exercise strong leadership. Coupled with this is

the problem of ambiguity of the future prospect which is making discordance between semi-department with regard to the organizational restructuring. Consequently, each semi-department have to exert 'maneuver' so that they can acquire larger capacity for enrolment, larger amount of research funds, more facilities, and the faculty personnel in order to keep the working environment as before.

Survival strategies to cope with these problems can be described under two broad aspects: efforts inside the organization (organizational reform) and building up of relationships with the outside (networking). Following are the illustrations of the changes that were taken place in HUTE in last a couple of years.

4. Survival Strategies

(1) Organizational Reform

a) Professional Schools

To cover the reduction of the delegation, and to 'dig up' new social needs, it is required to make outcome of learning more 'visible' to outside so that more people shows eagerness forward further study. The government scheme of professional school⁽⁴⁾ launched in 1999, is going to play a major role in university reform by identifying certain characteristics of the graduate school to be offering outstanding practical program for expert in these areas. The discussion in HUTE has started in 'Working Group on the Research for the Professional School' in 2001, and 'Committee for the Preparation of the Professional School' was established in October 2003. In academic year 2004, it is preparing to apply for the approval in four specialties: 'School Leaders', 'Specialist for Development Support in Education', 'Coordinator for the Education Practice', and 'Specialist on Health and Safety Education'.

The School Leader Specialty aims to provide expertise and training for school management and educational administration. Major trainees would be principal, assistant principal, school supervisors, and other middle level leaders in schools. The curriculum would include classes and internship based on 'cohort style learning' to meet the requirement for professional competence as a school leader who is capable of creating a school which is autonomous.

Specialist for Development Support Education Specialty aims to provide expertise and training for 'Special Support Education Coordinator' that MEXT noticed to allocate in each school. Major trainees would be teachers and those who are going to take care of children's health and mental development. Special attention is given to LD, ADHD, and other minor handicaps of children for schooling. The curricula would cover all the areas of

development psychology, consultation training and support planning.

Coordinator for the Education Practice Specialty aims to provide expertise and training for the curriculum planner and those who are going to undertake curriculum management in school. Major trainees would be middle leaders in school who are in the position of responsible in curriculum planning. The curricula are going to cover all the subjects regarding to curriculum planning and development.

Specialist on Health and Safety Education Specialty aims to provide expertise and training for the Health and Safety Management in School. This specialty is meant to cope with the increasing needs for health security of modern society such as HIV/AIDS, drug abuse or lifestyle related disease. Major trainees would be teachers and those who plan to undertake children's health management. The curricula would comprise of lectures on related subjects, workshops for health programming in school and so on.

b) Graduate School Kobe Satellite

To offset the locational disadvantage, the Graduate School Kobe Satellite located off-campus in downtown Kobe, has started its activity in 2001 academic year. The Satellite's convenient location gives serving teachers the opportunity to pursue graduate-level studies while continuing with their daytime jobs. At the same time, it serves as a point of interchange between the University and the community.

The Graduate School Kobe Satellite provides facilities for educational research and instruction chiefly for students enrolled in evening classes of the two courses: Educational Clinical Psychology course offered within the major field of School Education and the Integrated Studies course offered within the major field of School Subject Education. The satellite's facilities include a computer room, lecture rooms, and an educational psychology and counseling suite with interview rooms and playrooms. Counseling support is provided to children and families in need of psychological assistance in matters relating to the school and home. The university is planning to expand the field of enrolment to cover all the existing courses offered in daytime classes by the academic year 2005.

c) Faculty Staff Evaluation

Since academic year 2001, self-evaluation of university class has started. Each and Every classes is assessed by students, using 'Self-Evaluation Sheet' developed by 'Faculty Self-Evaluation Implementation Committee.' The results of evaluation are collected and analyzed by the committee. Then, an annual report is issued each year to serve the class improvement.

Apart from this, performance-based distribution of research funds were started in the academic year 2002. Approximately one-third of research funds for each faculty staff is based on the performance evaluation including: papers, publications, guiding students' research works, students' employment to the teaching job, and social activities.

However, there could be an argument on the linkage between evaluation of the class and distribution of research funds at the present moment. It needs further discussion to create a balance between validity and reliability of the class evaluation and adequacy of the distribution.

d) Faculty Development

In contrast with the self-evaluation is the external support system for the quality improvement of the classes, Faculty Development (FD) is the core for spontaneous improvement. 'Faculty Development Promotion Committee' was set up in academic year 2002 to take up a central role in this regard. The committee consists of two levels: the university level and the division level. The university level committee, consists of representatives from each division, and undertakes issuing the annual reports and organizing university level events.

However, major part of the activities is carried out by the division-level committees, so that character of each area of the subject get reflected in their activities. For instance, 1st division committee organized 'open classes' for the other faculty staffs, a questionnaire research on curriculum, a panel discussion on the practice in the class and material collection on the FD in 2002 academic year⁽⁵⁾.

(2) Networking

a) Hyokyo-net

To meet the requirements for educational practice and to strengthen the ties with graduates, a new system is being constructed now. The system is called 'The Network for Educational Practice at Hyogo university of Teacher Education' (Hyokyo-net). Apart from human networks based on 'Alumni Association', PC network plays a major role in this system.

The major work of Hyokyo-net is to play a central role in knowledge management for educational practice: to collect the problems in practice, and provide the solutions, the cases of practice, the outcome of studies and so on. The knowledge management structure is described as Figure 1⁽⁶⁾.

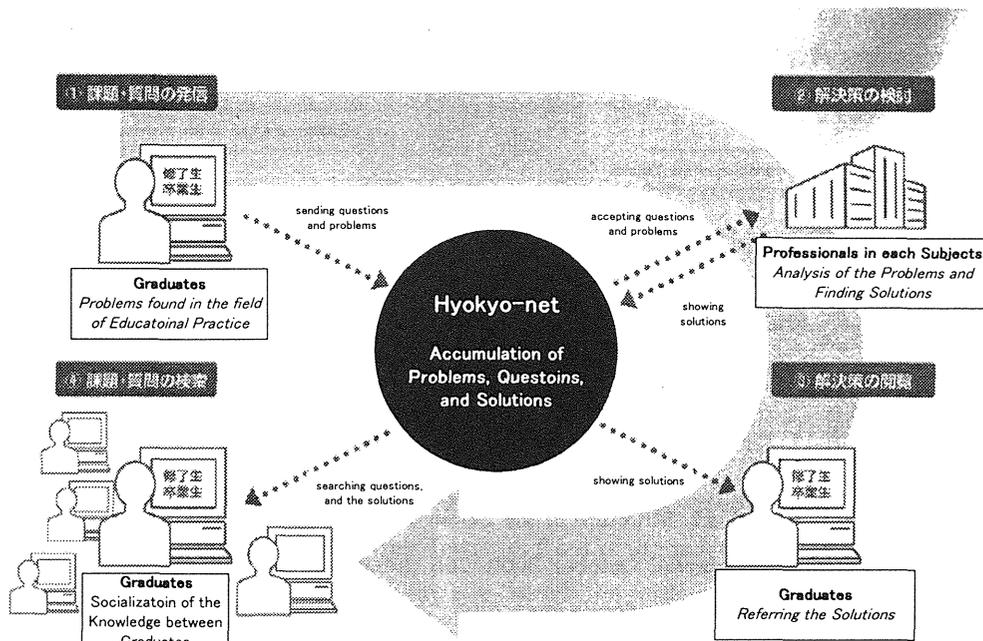


Fig. 1 Structure of the Knowledge Management in Hyokyo-net

The details of the management of Hyokyo-net are being discussed in 'Hyokyo-net Steering Committee' at present, planning to be activated in 2004.

b) The Center for the Promotion of Local Exchange

The Center for the Promotion of Local Exchange (CPLE) is the body set up to expand the network with the local schools and communities, in contrast with Hyokyo-net which is the network for graduates. CPLE was established with the aim of investigating, planning, and supporting exchange projects between the University and local bodies, as well as those in the surrounding areas; to promote exchange with the local community; and to contribute to local educational, academic, and cultural activities, so as to enhance the education and research activities of the University. The Center acts as a "comprehensive window," that is responsive to the needs of local residents and bodies in areas such as life-long education, educational counseling, and support in solving various local issues.

One of the outstanding works that the CPLE carried out is the School-Partnership Program. Any school in Hyogo prefecture can apply for the 'Lecture Delivery' free of cost. The database of the themes/topics collected from faculty staffs are created. The database is available on the net. The school requiring 'Lecture Delivery' can ask for the faculty staffs to come to the school and to be guided in the area of: session, classroom improvement, in-school

training and so on.

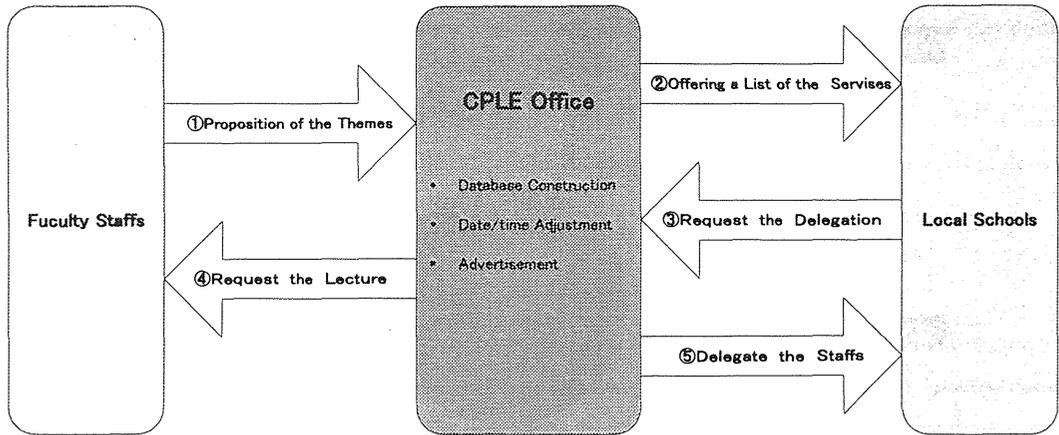


Fig.2. Structure of the School Partnership Program

The program started October 2002. 206 themes in 7 areas offered from the faculty staffs to the Program in the academic year 2003. The Total number of delegation was 32 cases in the academic year 2002. The cases were increased phenomenally to 148 in 2003 (up to 30th October).

5. Foresights

Though the above depicts the case of a national university reform in the grip of severe difficulties, it is assumed that many of efforts in other national universities for education hold more or less similarities with the above description. The vital question in the transformation into an 'Independent Administrative Corporation' of National Universities must be 'whether these series of efforts bring positive change or not?'

The organizational reforms are meant to meet the needs of 'consumers' in some manner. In other words, all these attempts include market mechanism as an element. It seems reasonable to think that becoming autonomous followed by the budget cut orient the organization towards a private enterprise. On the other hand, those networks created last a few years tend to strengthen the ties with the local system in existing society. This is meant to build up co-dependent relationships to keep the existing position of university.

Therefore, we can say that many of the attempts have 'both sides of the shield'. One side, of course is to deconstruct the existing system of higher education and accelerate the social change. The other side of the shield is to create confederacy and to resist the reshaping of educational systems. Similar case can be observed in other aspects of educational innovation

for higher education in general. For instance, establishment of training system for the school readers can be an antithesis to an attempt in recent years: appointment of principals from the private sector. Collaboration with the board of education can hold up the movement towards abolition of the system.

Then, how can we evaluate the present policies for National University Reform? Reactions of university presidents to the reforms are more negative than positive as found out through survey researches⁽⁷⁾. The de-regulations of universities are thought to be the 'White Elephant' in majority of national universities though many of them agree with the idea of becoming autonomous itself. Furthermore, impartial discussion will be difficult in this matter for most of the discussants (including the author) are 'insiders'.

However an obvious fall out is that these series of de-regulations in the transformation into 'Independent Administrative Corporation' triggered various movements and pulled out the 'pedants' from the 'Ivory Tower' in front of the public as were seen above. In this respect, the changes itself can be worthwhile though the contents of the changes are to be further examined.

<Reference>

-
- ⁽¹⁾ This paper is prepared for "The 6th Joint Seminar on Educational Administration between the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University and the Kansai Society for Educational Administration" held in Bangkok on 7th Nov. 2003. The paper is a report of the recent movement of HUTE summarized by the author's point of view: therefore, whole responsibility of this paper belongs to the author. The author worked for HUTE for four years as associate professor (lecturer up to March, 2002): served on the "Working Group for the Research on the Professional School for Education," "University Library Steering Committee," "Working Group for the Web-site Renewal," "Project Team for Recruiting Master Course Students," "Committee for the Promotion of Research Collaboration of Three Agents", "Hyokyo-net Steering Committee" and "Master Course Entrance Examination Committee" in 2003 academic year.
- ⁽²⁾ The description of the history and mission of HUTE is summarized from '2002-2003 Hyogo University of Teacher Education OUTLINE' issued by the General Affairs Division, HUTE.
- ⁽³⁾ On 1st October 2003.
- ⁽⁴⁾ The scheme has changed in large scale in 2003 academic year. See for example, 'Report of Subdivision on Universities, Central Council for Education', 18th March 2003.
- ⁽⁵⁾ There are five divisions in HUTE, based on the character of the study. The author had served on the Faculty Development Promotion Committee in 1st division in 2002 academic year.
- ⁽⁶⁾ The figure 1 is based on the figure described in the brochure for the Hyokyo-net, modified by the Author.
- ⁽⁷⁾ See for instance, a survey research to the university presidents carried out by Kyodo News © on 19th June, 2003.