Preface

This volume provides an empirical and qualitative analysis of the nature and extent of the Japanese academic profession and especially changes that took place over the period 1992–2007. It is based on responses to the Carnegie Survey 1992, in which the Japanese survey was conducted as a part, and the following Japanese Survey 2007, two comprehensive surveys with similar questionnaires administered to faculty samples in Japan, and has been developed, with enlargement, from Henbousuru Nippon no Daigakukyojushoku (The Changing Academic Profession in Japan), published in 2008. It covers key aspects of Japanese faculty members’ academic activities and their views on these activities.

Academia has a long history going back more than nine centuries worldwide to the birth of universities in the middle ages and about 140 years to the birth of the first modern university in Japan. Recent social changes include globalization, emergence of the knowledge-based society, marketization, corporatization, mass higher education, and lifelong learning. A specific important social change in Japan in recent years has been population decline, including that in the college-age population.

In addition to the social changes, national government policies have had huge effects on academia in terms of conditions, structures, and functions. The reform of university establishment standards in recent years has emerged as a key development in the field of higher education through a series of government policies of relaxation of regulations by PCAR (the Provisional Commission on Administrative Reform) and the UC (University Council). Accordingly, quality assurance and evaluation of teaching and research have become the focus of reforms since 1991, when the UC made proposals focusing on teaching reforms.

Teaching reform has been encouraged even more strongly since 2008, when the CCE (Central Council for Education) further made proposals focusing on teaching reforms in relation to areas including general education, curriculum, syllabus, tutoring system, small-group teaching, office hours, IT (information technology), GPA (grade point average), CAP, credit system, semester system, coursework, educational environment, and rigorous assessment of student academic achievement.
These social changes and government policies have inevitably impacted strongly on the academic profession. First of all, social changes affect faculty consciousness as well as their actions as regards the knowledge-based society, globalization, marketization, lifelong learning, and population decline. Second, higher education policies such as the reports of the UC and the CCE have brought variations in faculty status and created a professional career path. In relation to these policies, transformations of academia have included national universities’ corporatization, differentiated universities and colleges, and top-down governance and management. Third, “reconstruction of knowledge” has brought changes in university curricula, organizational bodies, and the roles and functions of faculty. Thus, faculty members have been subjected to social expectations as well as pressures bringing about changes in their status, standing, role, and academic productivity. In particular, expectations of academic productivity have dramatically shifted to a teaching orientation from a research orientation as a result of FD (faculty development), which has been carried out since 1998, even though Japan’s academics still maintain a strong preference for research.

As a result of these pressures and new visions of academia, the academic profession has been forced to form a new identity, with consequently many conflicts accompanying psychological stress. Academics have been required to reform the profession and reconsider the nature of scholarship through the integration of teaching and research and making further progress in academic productivity. The profession is increasingly expected to be sustainable in quality as well as ability so as to develop and create changes in society, policies, and knowledge.

In a major sense, the volume not only focuses on the empirical analysis but also pays great attention to the study of the Japanese academic profession from historical and comparative perspectives. The following aspects are particularly worth mentioning: First, some of the chapters deal with the social and economic environment as well as the educational context under which changes had taken place in the Japanese academic profession between 1992 and 2007. Second, a wide range of variables are employed in individual chapters with an aim of exploring the essential characteristics of the Japanese academic profession and the changes that had occurred in their activities and their views. Third, some efforts have been made to deal with the real effects of changes on Japan’s academic profession, what drives these changes, and how national policymakers may push the academic profession forward in their own national settings.

Anchored as the 2007 survey is in the original 1992 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Survey of the International Academic Profession, the volume provides an opportunity to document and assess the progress and prospects for the Japanese academic profession over the period.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge Professor Keith Morgan, who passed away in 2012 while contributing with much endeavor to the translation of Japanese articles into English.

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