

Employment on the Periphery of Japanese Higher Education: A Study of Foreign Adjunct Faculty

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Introduction

According to MEXT (2017), adjunct faculty make up roughly half of the teaching labor force in Japanese higher education, and in foreign languages and first-year curriculum the ratio leans considerably higher. As such, adjunct faculty may be deemed a crucial component of the higher education sector in Japan. Despite their numbers and contribution to the education of university students, adjunct faculty frequently have little or no voice in curricular or administrative matters and also lack access to the status, stability, research opportunities and financial rewards accorded to their full-time counterparts. Foreign adjunct faculty often face a host of additional challenges related to language and cultural barriers, differences in institutional cultures, and divergent teaching philosophies.

Project Aim

This project is a preliminary investigation into the personal, educational, and professional identities of foreign adjunct faculty and their work life at Japanese universities, and aims to provide a window on the choices and challenges associated with contingent employment in Japan.

Project Activities

Literature review

In Japan, there is limited research in English or Japanese on the conditions of adjunct faculty at universities. Thus, our initial approach was to conduct an extensive review of the large and growing literature on contingent faculty in North American universities. We completed an extensive annotated bibliography along with a nomenclature list that informed the development of our survey instrument, and will subsequently aid the analysis of our findings.

Survey development and implementation

A large-scale survey instrument was developed to investigate the personal attributes, motivations, and career patterns of foreign adjunct faculty along with their conceptualization of their role as adjunct faculty including decision-making processes in work selection, daily time and work-life management, attitudes toward research and publishing, and financial and retirement planning. We used an online survey platform to gather data.

Analysis and results

Data analysis is currently ongoing and we expect to present our results initially at the next annual Japan Association for Language Teaching Conference followed by a summary report to be published in the Center for Liberal Arts' journal *Karuchuuru*.