Summary of Research Results

on Teaching and Learning Management (2021-2023)

Abstract

This study analyzes university faculty members' perceptions of national Teaching and Learning Management (TLM) policies, the underlying determinants of those perceptions, and actual educational practices. A nationwide survey of 1,721 faculty members and interviews with 11 faculty members and 6 students were conducted to explore how national TLM policies are recognized, evaluated, and implemented in Japanese undergraduate education. The findings revealed considerable variation in policy awareness depending on academic discipline, position, and faculty rank. Common challenges also emerged, including excessive workloads, insufficient understanding of policy objectives, and fragmented institutional support. While university leadership and institution-wide initiatives may enhance policy awareness, they do not necessarily lead to positive evaluations of national TLM policies. Moreover, a gap was identified between institutional policy frameworks and student experiences. Although students expressed a desire for practical and transferable skills, awareness of diploma policies remained low. The visualization and utilization of learning outcomes were also found to be underdeveloped. In light of these findings, the study proposes a renewed conceptual framework—Teaching and Learning Management 2.0—that emphasizes learner-centeredness, departmental ownership, collaborative governance, and discipline-sensitive approaches to better align national policy not only with institutional strategies but also with faculty-led initiatives and classroom practices.

1. Members of the Research Committee

Position	Name	*Affiliation
Chairperson	Fujio Ohmori	Tohoku University
Research Fellow	Hisao Suzuki	Hokkaido University
Research Fellow	Masayuki Fujimura	Sophia University
Research Fellow	Tomoko Mori	Toin University of Yokohama
Research Fellow	Akiko Morozumi	University of Tokyo
Research Fellow	Jun-ichiro Yasuda	Kobe University

*Affiliation as of March 31, 2023

2. Objective

This study aims to provide a foundation for rethinking institutional practices and policy development related to Teaching and Learning Management (TLM), grounded in empirical evidence on how academic staff engage with and respond to TLM-related organizational initiatives in Japanese universities.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Clarify the extent to which academic staff recognize and evaluate national policies on TLM.
- Examine how academics' awareness of these policies influences their educational practices and engagement in institutional initiatives.
- Identify factors that contribute to differences in perceptions and responses of academics to these policies.
- Offer proposals—based on comprehensive analysis of the survey and interview findings—that address the challenges identified in national guidelines, particularly the insufficient penetration of TLM concepts among individual academic staff.
- Stimulate constructive dialogue among university stakeholders and policy makers toward advancing the functional effectiveness of TLM at higher education institutions.

Through a nationwide survey and in-depth interviews, this study aims to provide evidence-based insights to support institutional practices and national policy development, while contributing to the refinement and effective implementation of TLM strategies, particularly at the undergraduate level in Japanese universities.

3. Methodology

This study employed a nationwide questionnaire survey targeting undergraduate academic staff of Japanese universities, semi-structured interviews with selected institutions, and an analysis of how national policies on teaching and learning management (TLM) are perceived by academics and students.

A questionnaire was sent to 560 faculties across national, public, and private universities, which were selected on a voluntary basis. Within each selected university, faculties were chosen through simple random sampling. Six academic staff members per faculty were selected, totaling 3,360 potential respondents (Table 1). The survey forms were sent to each faculty office with a request to distribute them to one dean, one department head, and four other academics, ensuring diversity with respect to age, gender, and position. A total of 1,721 (672 by mail and 1,049 online) valid responses were

received, resulting in a response rate of 51% (Table 2). The survey was conducted from May 30 to June 30, 2022.

Table 1. Survey Target and Response Collection by Institutional Type

Category	Total	National	Public	Private	No Answer
Faculties Surveyed	560	81	59	420	-
Faculty Members Surveyed (6 per faculty)	3,360	486	354	2,520	-
Responses Received	1,721	262	180	1,277	2
Response Rate	51%	54%	51%	51%	-

Table 2. Positions of Faculty Members Responding

Category	Number (Rate)
Deans	278 (16%)
Department Heads	310 (18%)
Other Faculty Members	1,133 (66%)
Total	1,721 (100%)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six faculties selected based on academic discipline, size, and other relevant factors (Table 3). From each faculty, two academic staff members and one fourth-year student were interviewed, except for one case where only one faculty member was available. Academic staff were selected from those who had received the questionnaire, regardless of whether they had responded, and faculties were requested to consider diversity in academic experience, preferably including one associate professor when possible. Students were selected from among fourth-year students of the target faculty. In total, interviews were conducted with 11 faculty members and 6 students. The interviews were conducted online between September and October 2022, with each session lasting approximately 30 minutes. The institutional type (national, public, or private) has been omitted from this report, as it was found to have no significant impact on the results of this study.

Table 3. Overview of Interviewed Faculties and Participants

University Name	Area	Participants

University A	Humanities and Social Sciences	*Professor	*Professor	Fourth-year student
University B	Humanities and Social Sciences	*Professor	*Associate Professor	Fourth-year student
University C	Humanities and Social Sciences	*Professor	*Associate Professor	Fourth-year student
University D	Natural Sciences and Engineering	Assistant Professor		Fourth-year student
University E	Natural Sciences and Engineering	*Professor	Assistant Professor	Fourth-year student
University F	Medicine	*Professor	*Professor	Fourth-year student

*Indicates academic staff with experience in roles such as academic affairs committee member or department head.

It should be noted that the questionnaire was distributed to faculty members through university administrative offices. This method of distribution may have resulted in a respondent pool that is skewed toward individuals who are more engaged in educational improvement, and the findings may not fully reflect the views of the broader academic staff population.

A detailed overview of the questionnaire and interview items is provided in Section 4 (Scope and Study Items).

4. Scope and Study Items

This study focused on undergraduate programs at Japanese universities and examined the perceptions and practices related to teaching and learning management (TLM).

The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and open-ended items. It collected demographic information such as academic rank, age, gender, years of service, faculty affiliation, and faculty size. It also asked about institutional practices related to TLM, the implementation status of the three core policies—admissions, curriculum design and implementation, and degree awarding—as well as the assessment of learning outcomes, awareness and evaluation of initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), personal efforts to improve educational quality, expected student competencies, opportunities for discussion about curricula, time allocation

for professional duties, and administrative experience. Respondents were also invited to share their views on university education reform in an open-ended section.

The interviews focused on institutional efforts related to TLM policies, perceptions of national policy, views on degree awarding policies, and student experiences of the curriculum.

5. Analysis

The collected data were primarily analyzed using quantitative methods. Cross-tabulations were conducted to examine relationships among key variables, from which distinct respondent types were identified. To explore the factors associated with these types, multinomial logistic regression was performed on both the full sample and a subset comprising general academic staff.

Learning outcomes were visualized through cross-tabulations of the survey data, while open-ended responses were examined using qualitative analysis. In addition, interview data were analyzed qualitatively to provide deeper insights into the survey findings.

6. Key Findings

[Awareness and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning Management (TLM) Policies by Academic Staff]

➢ Faculty perceptions of national TLM policies vary significantly by academic discipline. This highlights the need for policy incentives and guidance that respect the specific contexts and internal dynamics of each field, rather than imposing uniform approaches across all disciplines.

➢ Many academic staff experience educational improvement initiatives as a heavy burden, particularly in faculties where limited understanding of TLM's purpose leads to its treatment as a routine task, resulting in a disproportionate workload for a few individuals and hindering broader recognition of its benefits.

➢ While holding leadership roles (e.g., deans, curriculum committee chairs) tends to increase awareness of TLM policies, it does not necessarily lead to more favorable evaluations. For example, curriculum committee chairs were highly aware of the policies but more critical of them.

- Understanding of the philosophy and significance of TLM differs greatly depending on faculty rank, role experience, and academic discipline. Senior faculty and those with administrative experience showed greater understanding, while junior faculty and those in disciplines less familiar with governance concepts tended to have lower awareness.

- Faculties and departments with more consistent educational improvement efforts tended to show higher awareness and more positive evaluations of TLM-related systems and policies.

- The role of university leadership is crucial in driving effective educational reform, with evidence showing that both university-level leadership and government information-sharing contribute to increased staff awareness of TLM, while a dialogic leadership style enhances faculty evaluations of related policies.

[Student Perceptions and Engagement]

- Even among students who were highly motivated in their studies and felt they had grown through the curriculum, few were aware of the degree awarding policy, which articulates intended learning outcomes.

- Many students expressed a desire to develop transferable competencies through active learning and coursework aligned with real-world needs.

[Visualization of Learning Outcomes]

- Some universities showed a significant lack of strategies for achieving the goals of learning outcome visualization, with little improvement observed over time.

- There was wide variation in assessment methods across disciplines, suggesting the importance of discipline-based education research (DBER) to develop context-sensitive approaches.

- Few institutions had established clear methodologies for using learning outcomes in actual educational improvement.

- Young faculty members in charge of implementing portfolios often felt overburdened and fatigued.

- Concerns were raised that only outcomes that are easy to measure and visualize might receive undue emphasis, potentially narrowing the scope of education.

7. Conclusion

This study offers a comprehensive view of how teaching and learning management (TLM) policies are understood, evaluated, and implemented in Japanese universities. The findings highlight both structural and cultural challenges that must be addressed to ensure meaningful educational improvement.

While awareness of national TLM policies is gradually increasing, perceptions vary widely across academic disciplines, faculty ranks, and institutional roles. In many cases, TLM is still perceived as a procedural burden rather than a meaningful effort linked to student learning. Excessive workload, limited understanding of the underlying purpose, and insufficient institutional support have hindered effective engagement, particularly among younger and non-leadership faculty.

The study also revealed that students—even those who are highly motivated—often lack awareness of key frameworks such as degree awarding policies. At the same time, they express a clear desire to develop transferable skills and understand how their learning is connected to real-world expectations. This gap between institutional intentions and student experience further points to the need for more integrated, learner-centered approaches.

Moreover, efforts to visualize learning outcomes remain inconsistent. Many universities lack concrete strategies to assess or use the results for educational enhancement, and concerns persist that only measurable outcomes will be prioritized. A discipline-sensitive, methodologically sound approach is needed to ensure that assessment serves genuine improvement rather than compliance.

In response to these findings, the study proposes a renewed conceptual framework—Teaching and Learning Management 2.0 (TLM 2.0)—as a vision for the next stage of higher education reform in Japan. The central philosophy of TLM 2.0 is to establish a system of educational management that directly impacts teaching and learning. To realize this, the framework emphasizes the following three core principles:

1. Departmental ownership of teaching and learning management, recognizing that meaningful improvement arises from the engagement of faculties and departments. At the same time, the leadership of university executives remains crucial, especially in cultivating an organizational culture that supports collaboration and continuous enhancement.

2. A shift from uniformity to creative diversity, by advancing discipline-sensitive approaches that respect the specific characteristics and pedagogical cultures of different academic fields.

3. Student engagement in TLM, based on the belief that reform must incorporate the perspectives of learners to remain relevant and effective.

To support the realization of TLM 2.0, the study also highlights the importance of system-level and institutional strategies, such as:

- Accreditation and national policy reforms that promote the transition to TLM 2.0

- Streamlining and simplifying education-related evaluation tasks

- Fostering open and transparent communication among university executives, deans, and academic staff

- Implementing faculty development (FD) initiatives focused on TLM

- Exploring strategies for student engagement in TLM

- Promoting discipline-based approaches to TLM

- Developing, assigning, and utilizing personnel with expertise in the pedagogy of each academic field.

Ultimately, TLM 2.0 envisions a transformation from procedural compliance to purposeful engagement, from administrative formality to genuine impact, and from top-down control to shared responsibility. It offers a roadmap for building a higher education system in which continuous improvement in teaching and learning is driven by the shared commitment of all stakeholders—executives, faculty, staff, and students alike.