Governance of Higher Education Institutions through Faculty Perspectives

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ABSTRACT: *The present study investigated the factors influencing faculty satisfaction within higher education institutions. A quantitative survey with 30 items was administered online to faculty members (n=72) from diverse disciplines and institutional roles. Specifically, the study examined the effects of top-down leadership, hierarchical organizational culture, and the current challenges faced by academic institutions. The results showed that faculty satisfaction was significantly influenced by the leadership style at the institutional level while institutions with rigid hierarchical cultures tended to have lower faculty satisfaction. The study also identified several challenges faced by academic institutions, including budget constraints, increased workload, and shifting educational paradigms. These challenges also directly impacted faculty satisfaction in a negative way. In conclusion, to enhance faculty satisfaction, institutions should foster transparent leadership, promote a participatory organizational culture, and proactively address the challenges posed by the evolving higher education landscape.*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education governance refers to the formal organization and management of institutions for tertiary or post-secondary education. In simpler terms, it encompasses how universities and colleges are operated (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Higher education institutions typically have a governing board (such as a board of regents or board of directors). This board plays a crucial role in decision-making. The executive head (often referred to as the CEO) leads the institution. There is also an administrative team responsible for day-to-day operations while faculty members participate in academic decision-making (Barringer et al., 2020).

However, governance structures vary globally, but they share common roots (Egitim, 2020; 2022). Tertiary education includes private not-for-profit, private for-profit, and public institutions, each governed by distinct management structures. The complexity increases due to different educational models (university education, technical and vocational education, community colleges) and ongoing debates about collegial vs. corporate governance (Bebbenroth & Kanai, 2011).Higher education governance faces several challenges in today's dynamic landscape. Many institutions struggle with inadequate funding, affecting their ability to maintain quality education, infrastructure, and research (Egitim, 2021). Balancing tuition fees to cover expenses while ensuring accessibility for students appears to be a delicate task.

Furthermore, institutions must adapt to global trends, collaborate across borders, and attract diverse student populations. The competitive nature of higher education necessitates maintaining or improving institutional rankings and reputation which places further pressure on faculty and administrators (Egitim, 2023; Yonezawa, 2019; Zeng, 2021) Furthermore, institutions must cater to varying needs, including non-traditional students, working professionals, and international learners, ensuring equal opportunities and addressing disparities based on race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Weick, 2012).

Striking a balance between faculty involvement (collegial governance) and efficient decision-making (corporate governance) while also ensuring transparent processes and accountability mechanisms appears to be another challenge facing these institutions (Heifetz et al., 2009; Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). Finally, preparing graduates for a rapidly evolving job market requires curricular flexibility and alignment with industry needs. Encouraging continuous learning beyond graduation (Khan et al., 2020).

Hence, the present case study seeks to understand faculty members' perspectives on the aforementioned challenges and how leadership should address those challenges while continuing to step up their internationalization efforts in Japanese universities. The research question is "How is faculty satisfaction affected by top-down leadership, hierarchical organizational culture, and present challenges facing academic institutions?"

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher Education Governance
In higher education institutions, leadership styles can significantly impact the overall culture, decision-making processes, and organizational effectiveness. Competent leaders can navigate challenges, understand the institution's unique context, and align decisions with institutional values and objectives, creating a strong sense of belonging among all members (Meng & Su, 2021; Menon & Motala, 2021).

As it stands, the majority of higher education institutions still operate based on a hierarchical approach where decisions and directives primarily flow from the upper echelons of the organizational structure to lower levels. Top-down leadership involves decisions made by senior administrators, such as university presidents, provosts, and deans. These decisions impact various aspects, including policies, resource allocation, and strategic planning. The authority and responsibility cascade downward, following a well-defined organizational hierarchy. Top-down leadership aims for streamlined processes and uniform implementation of policies across the institution (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020).

Leaders at the top set the institution's long-term vision, mission, and goals. Budgets, staffing, and infrastructure decisions are often centralized. Major policies (academic, financial, and operational) are crafted by senior leadership. Leaders hold subordinates accountable for achieving institutional objectives. The main advantages of this type of governance include quick decision-making and implementation, ensuring consistency with the overall institutional vision, and rapid response during emergencies (Burke, 2023; Bebenroth & Kanai, 2011; Stein, 2021).

However, this style of leadership also brings certain challenges and disadvantages. Faculty, staff, and students may feel excluded from decision-making. Hence, top-down changes can face resistance if not communicated effectively. Creativity and innovation may also suffer due to rigid structures and a lack of adaptability to dynamic environments.

Research indicates that effective leadership requires a delicate balance by engaging all stakeholders through transparent communication, adapting to changing needs while maintaining strategic direction, and combining decisions with input from diverse voices, creating bottom-up communication (Wahlers, 2018).

Challenges Facing Higher Education
Today, higher education institutions face a multitude of challenges in the current landscape across the globe. According to a recent study by, fewer individuals are opting for traditional higher education. Total enrollment declined by 12.3% between 2011 and 2022, with a 6.6% drop from 2019 to 2021 alone. Community colleges were hit particularly hard, experiencing a 13% decline during the same period. Male students are becoming increasingly scarce, constituting an all-time low of 41% of students. Soaring tuition fees contribute to the affordability crisis.

As costs escalate, students and their families bear the brunt. Tuition fees have surged, making college education increasingly unaffordable. The burden of student loans reaches staggering levels. Graduates often start their careers with substantial debt, affecting their financial stability.High costs deter potential students from pursuing higher education. Institutions face declining enrollments, affecting revenue streams. Students from low-income backgrounds may find it harder to access quality education due to financial barriers (Egitim & Watson, 2024; Egitim, 2024).

Furthermore, institutions grapple with limited budgets. Balancing expenses (faculty salaries, infrastructure, research) becomes intricate. Prioritizing resources while maintaining educational quality is a delicate task. Many institutions rely heavily on adjunct faculty (part-time instructors) due to cost considerations. On the other hand, maintaining academic excellence requires adequate funding, yet upgrading facilities, libraries, labs, and technology and integrating technology for effective teaching and administration require substantial investment. Although emerging alternatives promise quicker and cheaper pathways to careers, challenging the traditional college model, it is unlikely that they can offer the same level of rigorous and comprehensive education traditional higher education organizations offer.

Finally, faculty members face burnout, increased workloads, and uncertainty. The tenure system, once a hallmark of academic stability, is under scrutiny. The demanding nature of academic roles, coupled with various stressors, can lead to exhaustion, and negatively impact both faculty well-being and the quality of education. Faculty members juggle multiple responsibilities, including teaching, conducting research, mentoring students, and participating in administrative tasks. The pressure to publish research articles and secure funding can be overwhelming.

Faculty serve on committees, attend meetings, and participate in decision-making processes. Administrative tasks can accumulate, leaving less time for research and teaching addressing faculty burnout requires systemic changes, empathetic leadership, and a commitment to faculty well-being. A healthy faculty contributes to a vibrant and effective learning environment. This convergence of challenges poses a critical question: Is higher education at a tipping point, or can institutions reinvent themselves to meet the evolving needs of students? The future hinges on how colleges adapt and innovate in response to these headwinds (Egitim & Umemiya, 2023; Graburn, et al., 2008; Honkimäk et al., 2022).

METHOD

The present study explores faculty members' perspectives on the challenges facing them during their academic pursuits and how leadership should address those challenges while continuing to step up their internationalization efforts in Japanese universities. employed a quantitative research method. A survey was designed on Google Forms and distributed to faculty members (n=72). The questionnaire was based on a 4-point Likert scale 1 representing the most important and 7 representing the least important. The questionnaire consisted of 30 statements and sought to understand the faculty members' perceptions of their organizational culture, leadership style, the challenges their organizations faced, and the potential solutions to address these challenges. SPSS was used to analyze the data after it was collected.

FINDINGS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SE	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Faculty Satisfaction	3.21	0.0558	0.509	1.35	4.00
Top-down Leadership	3.50	0.0612	0.558	1	4
Hierarchical Organization	3.73	0.0671	0.612	1	4
Higher Ed. Challenges	3.17	0.0754	0.687	1	4

The Pearson Product Moment method was used to calculate the correlation since the purpose of this research was to understand the relationship between leadership style (α=0.87), organizational culture (α =0.91), current challenges in higher education (α =0.71), and faculty satisfaction (α =0.89). The data demonstrates that the correlation coefficient between top-down leadership and faculty satisfaction is -0.067 which indicates a negative relationship between two variables. In other words, the top-down leadership negatively affected faculty satisfaction. The findings also showed a negative correlation between hierarchical organization and faculty satisfaction (-0.0031) meaning hierarchical organization was also negatively associated with faculty satisfaction. more inclusive leadership and organizational culture may be necessary to enhance faculty satisfaction. The challenges were also influential in the faculty's lack of satisfaction which was a positive correlation (0.047).

Table 2: *Relationships between NPRM and BPN Subscales Controlled for Gender and Age*

Dep. variable	B	S.E.	$b*$	t	p	R^2
Top-down leadership	-0.067	-.081	.589	6.788	< .001	.503
Hierarchical Organization	-0.0031	-.075	.517	6.516	< .001	.679
Higher Ed. Challenges	0.047	.057	.036	.894	< .001	.417

Note. n = 75

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These results show that faculty satisfaction was directly influenced by the governance style, organizational culture, and the present issues facing higher education institutions. Faculty satisfaction was negatively associated with all three dependent variables which shows that the role of leadership is crucial in improving faculty satisfaction so that we can foster a positive teaching and learning environment in universities (Barringer et al., 2020; Egitim, 2021).

The study recommends that leadership focus on engaging all faculty, including part-time faculty, in professional learning opportunities. For this, sustained programs should be designed such as faculty learning communities to promote improved teaching practices and equity outcomes. Faculty satisfaction directly impacts student success and overall institutional effectiveness. Implementing these recommendations can contribute to a more fulfilling and supportive academic environment (Menon & Motala, 2021).

Fostering an inclusive campus environment by being transparent and actively working to improve the campus climate can help enhance faculty satisfaction and positively affect student satisfaction, and the overall outcome of learning and teaching. Furthermore, recognizing and rewarding faculty efforts through mechanisms such as teaching awards, tenure, and promotion should be implemented to bolster the positive campus climate. In conclusion, to enhance faculty satisfaction, institutions should foster transparent leadership, promote a participatory organizational culture, and proactively address the challenges posed by the evolving higher education landscape (Ouyang et al., 2020).

One of the limitations of this study was the sample size as it was not possible to implement a structural equation model which could provide a better representation of the associations between the variables of interest. Hence, large-scale future studies should focus on understanding how each factor affects one another through confirmatory factor analysis and further investigate the causal relationships between the said variables (Argote, 2013; Asaoka, 2018; Yonezawa, 2019).

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