Diverse Student Counseling Systems in Japanese Universities: A comparison with the US system

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Abstract:
Student counseling systems of Japanese universities are diverse and depend on the situation at each university. We noticed several differences in student counseling systems between Japan and the US. The Japan Student Service Organization (JASSO) published a guideline, Practical Approaches for Completion of Student Counseling Services in Universities, in 2007. Kanazawa University positions its student counseling service as part of its Health Service Center. We discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this system comparing with the other universities in Japan and the US.

Introduction / Background:
The total number of students using the counseling service in our university (Kanazawa University) is increasing each year, with a diversifying range of procedures that include consultation for faculty members, crisis management for students who attempt suicide, and guidance for communication skills. Establishing a student counseling system arrangement is important to enhance the duties of student counseling service, and so we have organized information about student counseling in Japan and USA and compared their characteristics.

Methods:
We compared the systems of student counseling in Japan and the USA as summarized in Practical Approaches for Completion of Student Counseling Services in Universities published by the Japan Student Service Organization (JASSO) in 2007. We also present examples of the advantages and disadvantages of the student consultation system used at the Kanazawa University Health Service Center.

Results:
Compare the systematic approaches of student counseling services in Japanese universities with those in the US. (Table 1)
- Compared to those of the USA, student counseling facilities in Japan have weak positions and fragile systems.
- In the USA, heads of student counseling facilities have experience in student counseling duties. On the other hand, heads of Japanese systems usually do not have this experience (including at Kanazawa University).
- In the USA, college counselors take therapeutic approaches in their practices. However it is not allowed in Japan, as there is a long history of educational approaches in Japan, and also that legally the Japanese health insurance system does not permit psychotherapy.
- In Japanese universities, there are no definite guidelines or standards about the duties or numbers of counselors. This is due to the fact that counselors and psychotherapy still lack social acceptance.

Describe the Student Support System of Kanazawa University and role of counselors. (Figure 1)
Duties of counselors
1. Counseling
   1) Personal counseling for students and faculty, consultation for students, faculty and parents, guidance for nurses.
   2) Interviews after regular health checkups.
   3) Interviews and coaching after personality tests.
   4) Supervision of counseling for harassment, international students, careers, and students with disabilities.
2. Relationship negotiations, liaisons, and collaboration
   1) Students, faculties, parents, campus counseling facilities, hospitals and clinics.
3. Management of student counseling duties
   1) Cooperation with part-time counselors to help them take the proper actions.
   2) Totaling and analyses of student counseling.
4. Preventive education, Training
   1) Classes on mental health and well-being in the liberal arts division, and classes in faculties and graduate school (appointed as associate members).
   2) Speakers at seminars on faculty and staff development.
   3) Guidance for student groups.
   4) Provision of extracurricular programs (student support programs).
The position depends on the university. Link directly to the president or vice-president. Licensed psychologists, approved psychologists are qualified counselors (licensed psychologists, approved psychologist) or the university common center. The role of student counseling centers is one of the core activities of education in universities, and they support the personal growth of each student during their time at university. Universities are responsible for guiding students.

Personnel responsible for student support in the wider sense

In higher education, students are given various programs and support through compulsory and elective classes to gain better college life and study skills in the areas of economics, health and career.

Situation of student counseling centers

Collaboration with different specialties

In large and medium universities, specialists are categorized by their own specialty. Counseling for study is provided by academic advisors based on learning theory. Career counseling is provided at career centers. Counseling for harassment is provided by ombudsmans, conflict-solution centers, and human rights centers. Health counseling and mental health counseling are provided at the campus medical clinic. In small universities, these services might collected together. There are almost no universities that do not have a counseling center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>A Comparison of the Systematic Approaches of Student Counseling Services in Japanese and American Universities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What student support should be at the University</td>
<td>First and second year undergraduate students choose the homeroom teacher system and expect to use the services by themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mission of student support in a wider sense</td>
<td>Student support in a wider sense is one of the core activities of education in universities, and they support the personal growth of each student during their time at university. Universities are responsible for guiding students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel responsible for student support in the wider sense</td>
<td>The university staff and faculty Other specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person in charge for student support</td>
<td>President, vice president responsible for education and student support, directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names of student counseling centers</td>
<td>Counseling Center, Counseling Service, Counseling and Psychological Services, etc.</td>
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<td>Situation of student counseling centers</td>
<td>92.3% of universities have an organization for student counseling (Hironaka Report) Most of them are not managed well.</td>
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<td>Position of student counseling centers</td>
<td>The position depends on the university. Linked directly to the president or vice-president, linked to the student office, or the university common center. Many universities do not define the student support center appropriately.</td>
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<td>Operation of student counseling centers</td>
<td>There are many different situations. Some are organized well as a shared service part of universities, and branches in some offices or rooms are provided.</td>
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<td>Head of student counseling centers</td>
<td>Frequently the head of the center is not a professional psychologist.</td>
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<td>Role of student counseling centers</td>
<td>The roles of student counseling centers are defined as 1) help system, 2) educational activities, 3) community activities and 4) practical research activities. They usually do not have sufficient staff to do all of these.</td>
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<td>Duties of a student counseling organization</td>
<td>Many roles are carried on. 1) Personal counseling, 2) Providing seminars and classes, 3) Place for student growing up etc.</td>
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<td>Number of counselors</td>
<td>There are no defined standards. Currently, there are 124 staff counselors in 77 out of 391 universities. There is one staff counselor for 5,021 students. In 391 universities that employ part-time counselors, there is one part-time counselor for 3,125 students.</td>
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<td>Qualification of counselors</td>
<td>Clinical psychologist, college counsel. There are many staff who lack licences for psychological work.</td>
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<td>Student counseling centers budgets (example)</td>
<td>The average budget for a student counselor center is around $6,700 (excluding labor costs)</td>
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<td>Cooperation with other specialized student support organizations and professionals</td>
<td>There are few professionals working within the university for student aid. Most of the professionals working together on campus are health care providers, including physicians, public health nurses, nurses. Some universities may have the health care providers all grouped in the same organization, or not have any at all - there is no consistency.</td>
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<td>Collaboration with different student support systems</td>
<td>Student counseling centers have a long history and provide various student-related support. Currently, they provide study support, carrier counseling, harassment counseling, health counseling and mental health support.</td>
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Conclusion:
Provide examples of advantages and disadvantages of the student counseling activities in the Health Service Center at Kanazawa University.

- Some Japanese students these days use the ego defense mechanism, not repression but disassociation, to address their problems. They are not conscious of their own problems, and somatize them. In approaches for somatoform disorders and psychosomatic disorders it is an advantage that the Health Service Center, where health professionals such as physicians and nurses and counselors take care of both body and mind, can act as a consultation service.
- However, students who feel uncomfortable going to the hospital or receiving medical treatment are reluctant to visit the Health Service Center. A feeling of resistance towards medical care personnel is a disadvantage, especially for early detection of mental disorders.
- Ideally, other student services or counseling sections other than the Health Service Center, such as their department, the Career Counseling Division, the Counseling Room for Harassment, etc., would collaborate closely with each other, allowing the students to go to those instead.

![Kanazawa University Student Counseling System](image)

Figure 1. Kanazawa University Student Counseling System