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The Strategic Role of Student Affairs and Services – Different Models of Supporting Students across the Globe

EAST ASIA:

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Building on the Strengths of Student Participation

—Challenges of the Cooperative Model—

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Characteristics of Student Services in Japan

Most student services are provided by university cooperatives membered by students and other university personnel.

- 89% of national universities, 41% of public universities, and 16% of private universities have university co-ops, and 42% of all university students are members of university co-ops.

I would like to underline, explain and show:

- The global significance of this student services model?
- What historical processes led to its establishment?
- What kinds of student services are offered at present?

And I would like to show the meaning of this model in:

- The formation of civil societies around the globe and the increasing role of “citizens” in making the 21st century world.

The purpose of university education is becoming more and more to turn students into citizens and the role of university co-ops is becoming increasingly important in this process.

Three Principal Student Services Models

Europe

Our own experiences in international exchange have revealed three principal models for student services around the world:

1) **European model:** Student services made available through a government-backed organization such as DSW (Das Deutsches Studentenwerk) in Germany and CNOUS (Le Centre national des oeuvres universitaires et scolaires) in France. These organizations, receiving government assistance to provide collective management of dormitories, dining halls and scholarships, are housing and feeding students, and helping them study and graduate to become citizens.

Three Principal Student Services Models

US and Japan

2) **American Model:** Student services made available by universities themselves backed by government assistance and private foundations. Utilizing assistance offered by governments and private foundations, universities themselves provide dormitories, dining halls and scholarships, while university shops set up by outside companies sell textbooks and other daily necessities. Essentially it is the universities themselves that house and feed students and aid them in their studies to graduate and become citizens.

3) **Japanese Model:** Student services made available by university co-ops despite insufficient government assistance. Japanese universities have not been enthusiastic about increasing dormitory space, in light of how dormitories have been used by student movements. The administration of scholarships has been entrusted to the Japan Scholarship Foundation (later the Japan Student Services Organization) and, as a general rule, these scholarships are presently offered as loans. Students in Japan do not have adequate access to housing, and the scholarships available are also insufficient. Co-ops are now relied upon to provide meals and other products/services necessary for campus life, and they are making every possible effort to improve housing and scholarships as well.

Characteristics of Japan's University Co-ops Developing since 1946

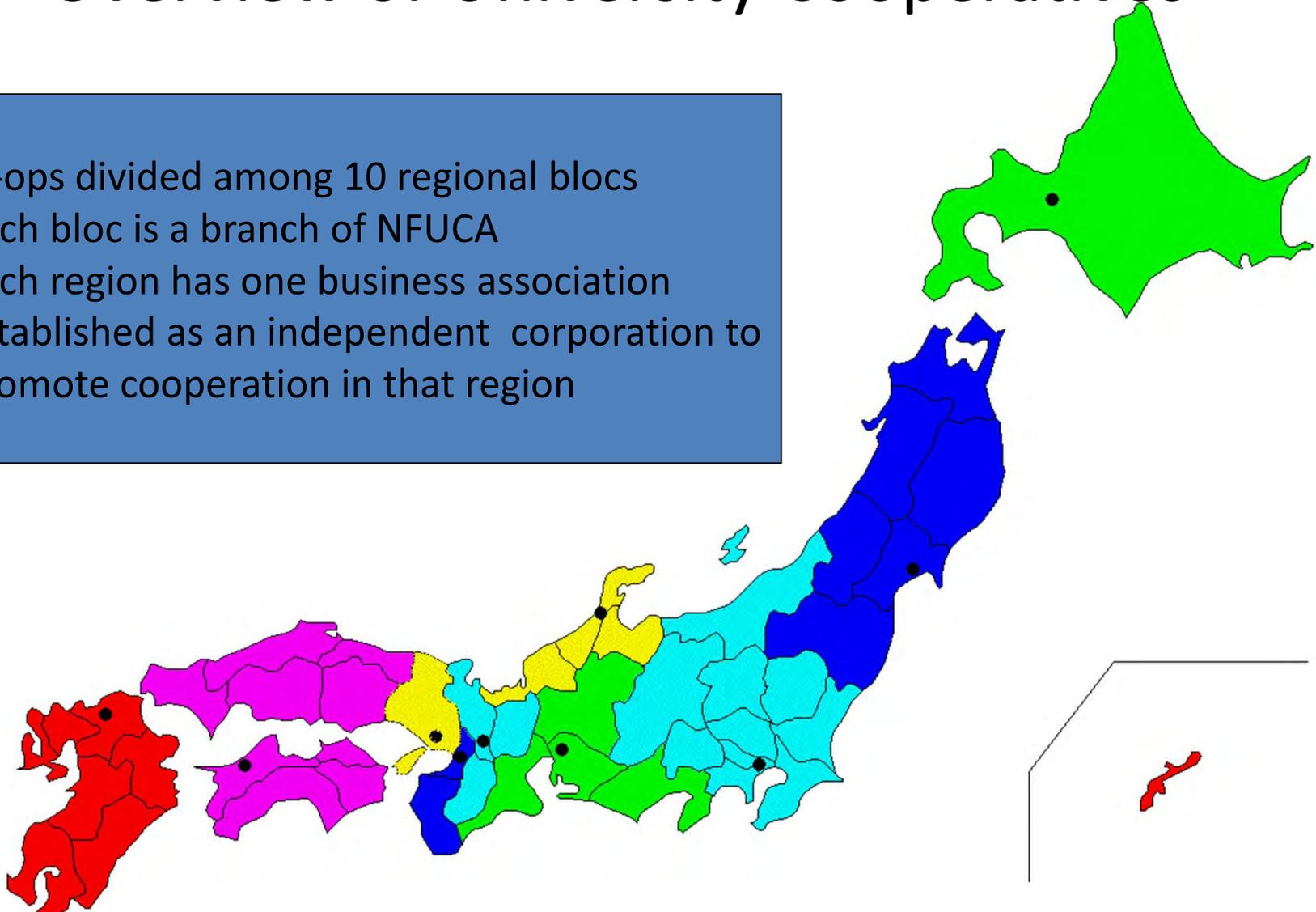
- 1) **Spontaneous organizations:** Japan's university co-ops were established and funded as cooperative corporations by university students and faculty in the impoverished conditions Japan faced following the end of World War II.
- 2) **Democratic operation:** Operating policies are decided in a one-person/one-vote democratic fashion, and operations are carried out by full-time and part-time workers.
- 3) **Not-for-profit business model:** University co-ops operate on a not-for-profit basis in accordance with the Consumers' Cooperative Associations Act.
- 4) **Profits returned to co-op members:** The fruits of co-op activities are returned via the prices and quality of the products provided to co-op members. Any surpluses are donated to the university, utilized for facility/equipment investment or allocated as otherwise resolved by the General Assembly.
- 5) **Cooperation between university co-ops:** University co-ops have been bolstering their competitiveness by establishing business associations and pursuing other tie-up activities in their respective regions. They are also collaborating on a nationwide basis to improve the efficiency of their businesses and activities.
- 6) **Agreements with universities for gratuitous lease of facilities:** Co-ops across Japan have been able to conclude such agreements because the vast majority of university students and faculty are share-and-stakeholders.

Japan's University Co-ops at Present

- NFUCA has a total of 228 members: 212 university co-ops, 6 inter-college co-ops, and 10 business associations.
- Total co-op membership stands at 1.51 million persons. Approximately 42% of all university students in Japan are members. Similarly, about 31% of all faculty are members.
- University co-ops are active on the campuses of national, public, and private universities across the country.

Overview of University Cooperatives

- 1) Co-ops divided among 10 regional blocs
- 2) Each bloc is a branch of NFUCA
- 3) Each region has one business association established as an independent corporation to promote cooperation in that region



Restaurants

- There are a total of 367 co-op restaurants being operated at universities nationwide.
- Service is provided via the local business association.
- Opinions offered every day are reflected in the menu, and the restaurants have earned very good reputations.
- Many of the halls are under university management. Ordinarily they are also utilized as student halls.
- Accordingly, these restaurants are extremely crowded at the start of new semesters, etc.



Stores

- The photo on the left shows a bookstore, the one on the right a store selling daily necessities.
- Stores come in a wide variety, from stores specializing in books, personal computers, or other goods to general stores offering other daily necessities, school supplies, and travel agency services.
- There are about 700 stores in universities across Japan.



Services

Left: A store offering travel services

Right: Student members providing advice to newly-enrolled students.

This event is held every March to April. Many senior students, involved in university co-op operation, offer advice on academics and campus life. These events are popular not only with new students but also with their parents or guardians.



Assistance for Student Living

Summarizing the above, university co-ops provide the following services at universities nationwide:

- 1) Food services
 - Co-ops provide dining halls, convenience stores, etc.
- 2) Sales of textbooks, books/magazines, daily necessities
 - Co-ops have opened stores of various sizes and formats in line with demand and usage levels.
- 3) Provision of computer equipment/software
 - Co-ops select equipment and provide software to suit the university's degree of specialization.
- 4) Travel services, etc.
 - Co-ops meet travel needs for various purposes: academic conferences, study abroad, educational matters, personal development, etc.
- 5) Accommodation placement (42,000 rooms)
 - Placement by co-ops satisfies about 40% of the total nationwide demand for student apartments.
- 6) University Cooperatives Mutual Aid (650,000 persons)
 - About half of all university co-op members are mutual aid program members as of 2011.

Scale of operations: 200 billion yen (US\$2.4 billion) / year

Support for Student Growth

In addition to the above, university co-ops are also engaged in activities that directly support the growth of students.

- 1) **Career development support:** Co-ops provide employment information and incidental products in sets to help students in their job-hunting efforts.
- 2) **Indirect educational support:** Co-ops themselves hold language classes, civil service examination lectures, and other sub-school activities and help arrange for student participation in these to assist students' career development.
- 3) **Supplementary educational support:** Co-ops help arrange remedial instruction, PC lessons, etc., by senior students to assist junior students in their university education.
- 4) **Intern training support:** Co-ops collaborate with universities to encourage students to participate in consumer co-operative businesses and activities and to provide them with work experience and knowledge pertaining to the organization, significance, activities, etc., of co-ops.

Support for University Operations

University co-ops also cooperate with universities by performing various support functions for university operations.

- 1) **Sales of research/educational supplies:** Co-ops supply educational aids, stationery items, etc., needed by laboratories and classrooms
- 2) **Support for university libraries:** Co-ops take receipt, sort and shelve books and carry out other operations on behalf of libraries.
- 3) **Scholarship support:** Co-ops provide funds available from surpluses as scholarships through universities.
- 4) **Undertaking of outsourced university operations:** Co-ops try to meet the university needs for greater operational efficiency, thereby contributing to more efficient university administration.

Student Participation and Growth

Students participate in various ways in the following businesses and activities, and achieve growth through this participation.

1) Students participate in the operation (administration) of university co-ops

- Students themselves are the key component in co-op operation, and half of the executive positions on the Board of Directors are filled by students.
- Faculty members account for most of the remaining half, with only one or two full-time co-op staff serving as executives.

2) Students interact with faculty members etc. through participation

- Board of Directors discussions are carried out democratically with no distinctions drawn among students, faculty, and full-time co-op staff.

3) Students participate in product/store development

- Students actively participate in the development of products and the creation of customer-friendly stores.
- Users' opinions are aggregated on a day-to-day basis and suitable efforts made to improve stores.

4) Students use “opinion cards” to improve and let know university co-ops

- Opinion cards are not used solely for processing complaints and soliciting requests; they also serve as on-campus communication tools.
- Exchanges via opinion cards have been posted by students on the Internet and have become a popular topic of discussion; they have even been compiled and published as a best-selling book: “Seikyo no Shiraishi-san” (Mr. Shiraishi of the Co-op”)

Global Democratization and the Role of Co-ops

With **civil society** gaining ground in many countries around the world, **democracy** has also taken root in Japan since the end of World War II and brought about **peaceful changes of administration**.

Democratically-controlled governments must co-operate with each other and restrain the excesses of multi-national corporations to prevent global economy disruption.

It has become increasingly important in this context that **co-operatives as not-for-profit enterprises** expand their businesses.

The United Nations has declared 2012 to be the **International Year of Co-operatives**.

Japan's co-ops are reconsidering their own approaches and seeking to improve them, and university co-ops are taking on an active role within **the Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives**.

The Democratization of Universities and Society and the Role of University Co-ops

The role of universities is to produce **citizens and citizen leaders** for the 21st century.

University co-ops have played a major role in the **democratization of Japan's universities and society**.

While many student movements lost their clout after becoming overly political and radicalized, university co-ops have contributed to **campus improvement**, conducted campaigns on behalf of **peace and the environment**, and thereby extended their influence.

Many university co-op personnel have also been sent to local co-ops brought together in the **Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU)**.

Through these activities, Japan's university co-ops have produced **independent and creative citizens** needed in the 21st century.

Exchange with Asian Countries

In keeping with the aforementioned efforts, Japan's university co-ops have also pursued exchange with university co-ops in Asian countries.

At the ICA-AP General Assembly held in Vietnam in 2008, the **ICA Committee on University/Campus Cooperatives for Asia and the Pacific** was recognized as an independent committee and the President of NFUCA was named the Committee Chairperson.

A **workshop** was held in Indonesia in 2010, and another will be held in the Philippines this year.

We will disseminate **Japan's university co-op model** to various Asian countries, tailoring it to their respective circumstances. Japan's university co-ops hope to do all that they can in this regard.

Confronting Inadequate Government Assistance and Universities' Growing Business Orientation

Japan has seen **no major improvements** in the government's policies toward universities despite changes of administration.

Government assistance to private universities, which account for more than 70% of Japan's universities, is still woefully inadequate, on top of which the government is seeking to incorporate national/public universities and **to cut government expenditures on universities.**

Accordingly, national/public universities as well as private universities have become **increasingly business-oriented** and are seeking to curtail their student services budgets.

Given these circumstances, university co-ops are speaking out on behalf of undergraduate, graduate, international students as well as faculty as they endeavor **to further enhance various student services.**

Missions and Visions of University Co-ops

University co-ops view cooperation, collaboration, independence and participation as their primary missions.

We will contribute to the enrichment of university life through the **cooperation** of undergraduates, graduates, international students and faculty.

We will **collaborate** as a learning community in the realization of university philosophies and goals, as well as contribute to the enrichment of higher education and advancement of research.

We will work as an **independent** organization to invigorate universities and their communities, as well as contribute to the enrichment and advancement of society and culture.

We will, as an attractive business enterprise, encourage the active **participation** of members, broaden cooperative experience, and realize a sustainable society that is kind to both people and the planet.

University co-ops have clear-cut **visions** based on these four missions, and they have continued to pursue activities through **action plans** that spell out these visions in concrete form.

All the efforts discussed thus far have been based on these missions, visions and action plans, and we will continue following this direction for future activities.

Improving Student Services through International Exchange!

As noted earlier, Japan's university co-ops have cooperated in the development of university co-ops and **the improvement of student services in Asian countries** in accordance with the aforementioned philosophies and activities.

While there has been an unfortunate decline in venerable American university co-ops such as those at Harvard and Berkeley, we have continued to cooperate and pursue closer exchange with those **university co-ops still doing well**; we have also collaborated with the National Association of College Stores (NACS).

In Europe, we have maintained exchange with **DSW** in Germany, **CNOUS** in France and a variety of **other student services organizations**.

I earnestly hope that this **Bologna Conference** will lead to greater standardization of, and qualitative improvement in, student services in European countries, and to improvements in the quality and quantity of student services worldwide through further international exchange.

Thank you very much for your kind attention!