

University Cooperatives in Nurturing 21st Century Sovereign People: For the International Decade of Co-operatives, 2011-2020

SHOJI Kokichi

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Abstract

Japan's university co-operatives provide exceptionally good examples of student services activities that are run by campus co-operatives and are mainly organized by students themselves, along with some assistance from professors, staff members and co-operative specialists. UNESCO, in its 2009 communique recognizing that student services are one of universities' three pillar projects, along with education and research, appealed to its member nations to strengthen student services activities. In major European nations---especially France and Germany---governmental or quasi-governmental organizations are providing student services through the construction and management of dormitories and canteens, as well as the integrated management of scholarships. In the United States, in most cases, each university is providing student services by doing the same activities, as a part of university management. On the other hand, in Japan, starting from back in the postwar destitute period, students themselves created consumers' co-operatives in order to run canteens, bookstores and stationary shops. They have now developed these businesses such that they provide travel agency services, supply of computers and associated goods, foreign language courses and courses preparing them for public officials' examinations. In addition, they help by providing apartment rooms to cover the dormitory shortage and by offering some scholarship grants, which supplement Japan's principally loan-based scholarship system. Asian neighbor nations have been trying to develop university co-operatives following the Japanese model. Based on these activities, Japan's university co-operatives are helping students to learn the spirit and practice of co-operation and are nurturing them as 21st century world sovereign citizens, in collaboration with universities. In the 21st century, most nations are developing democratic societies and progressing toward a global democratic society. In this development, co-operatives, which are ordinary peoples' enterprises, have

been increasing their significance, along with the development of democratic governments that embody sovereign people's will more and more exactly. The Japanese people are facing challenges to activate co-operatives as sovereign people's enterprises, as well as to make their governments more and more reflective of people's will, so that Japan may have a clearer role in constructing a more peaceful and co-operative world. Japan's university co-operatives are expected to play an increasingly significant role in making more and more students aware of this mission through various co-operative activities.

Key words: university co-operative, global democratic society, ordinary people's enterprise

I Japan' University Co-operatives in the Contemporary World

Characteristics of Student Services in Japan

In Japan, most student services are provided by university co-operatives, whose members include students and other university personnel. 92% of national universities, 40% of public universities, and 15% of private universities have university co-ops, and 41% of all university students are members of university co-ops.

In this paper I would like to explain this student services model and discuss its global significance, the historical processes that led to its establishment, and the kinds of services it offers at present. I would also like to show the implications of this model for the formation of democratic societies around the globe and the increasing role of *sovereign citizens* in making the 21st century world.

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

Three Principal Student Services Models

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

In Europe, student services are made available through

government-backed organizations such as DSW (*Das Deutsches Studentenwerk*) in Germany and CNOUS (*Le Centre national des oeuvres universitaires et scolaires*) in France. These organizations, which receive 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 sovereigns.

In the United States, student services are 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 sovereign citizens.

In comparison with these systems, in Japan, student services are made available by university co-ops, despite insufficient government assistance. Japanese universities have not been enthusiastic about increasing dormitory space, in light of the ways that dormitories have been used by student movements in the past. 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 and 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

Japan's university co-ops are characterized by six major features.

First, they are spontaneous organizations. Japan's university co-ops were established and funded as co-operative corporations by university students and faculty in the impoverished conditions that Japan faced following the end of World War II. Second, they are run by democratic operations. Operating policies are decided in a one-person/one-vote democratic fashion,

and operations are carried out by full-time and part-time workers.

Third, they are developed on a non-profit business model. University co-ops operate on a not-for-profit basis in accordance with the Consumers' Co-operative Associations Act. Fourth, profits are therefore 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 and equipment investment, or allocated as otherwise resolved by the General Assembly.

Fifth, they co-operate among themselves. University co-ops have been bolstering their competitiveness in the market 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. Sixth and last, they have 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

The National Federation of University Co-operative Associations (NFUCA) has a total of 220 members: 205 university co-ops, 6 inter-college co-ops, and 9 business associations. The total co-op membership stands at 1.54 million persons. Approximately 42% of all university students in Japan are members. Similarly, about 31% of all faculty members are members of university co-ops. University co-ops are active on the campuses of national, public, and private universities across the country.

Geographically, university co-ops are divided among 9 regional blocs, each of which is a branch of NFUCA. Each region has one business association established as an independent corporation to promote cooperation in that region.

There are 553 co-op restaurants being operated at universities nationwide. Services are provided via the local business associations. 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, and such.

Stores come in a wide variety, ranging 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 six hundred and seventy stores, including those offering travel services, in universities across Japan.

Student members also provide advice to newly-enrolled students. This event is held every March to April. Many upper-class students who are 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 a variety of services at universities nationwide.

University co-ops provide 1) food services at dining halls, convenience stores, and such, and 2) textbooks, books/magazines, daily necessities at stores of various sizes and formats in line with demand and usage levels. University co-ops select and provide 3) computer equipment and software to suit the university's degree of specialization, and provide 4) travel services to meet students' and faculty's needs for various purposes such as academic conferences, study abroad, educational matters, personal development, and such.

University co-ops further provide 5) accommodation placement of about 42,000 rooms which satisfies about 45% of the total demand for student apartments in all universities having co-operatives. And finally, university co-ops provide 6) the University Cooperatives' Mutual Aid Program for about 646,000 persons who are about a half of all university co-op members as of 2013.

Support for Student Growth

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

First, university co-ops offer career development support. Co-ops provide employment information and incidental products in sets to help students in their job-hunting efforts. Second, university co-ops offer indirect educational

support. Co-ops themselves hold language classes, civil servant examination lectures, and other sub-school activities, and help arrange for student participation in these, in order to assist students' career development.

Third, university co-ops offer supplementary educational support. Co-ops help arrange remedial instruction, PC lessons, and such, which are done by senior students to assist junior students in attaining their educational goals. Fourth, university co-ops offer intern training support. Co-ops collaborate with universities to encourage students to participate in consumer co-operative businesses and activities so as to provide them with work experience and knowledge pertaining to the organization, significance, activities, and other aspects of co-ops.

Support for University Operations

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

First, university co-ops handle the sales of research and educational supplies. Co-ops supply educational aids, stationery items, and such, needed by laboratories and classrooms. Second, university co-ops carry out support for university libraries. Co-ops take receipts, sort and shelve books and carry out other operations on behalf of libraries.

Third, university co-ops assist with some scholarship support. Co-ops provide some funds from surpluses, which are available as scholarships passed to students by universities. Fourth, university co-ops undertake outsourced university operations. Co-ops try to meet the university needs for greater operational efficiency, and thereby contribute to more efficient university administration.

Student Participation and Growth

Students participate in various ways in the university co-ops' businesses and activities, so that they grow not only as humans, but also as professionals.

First, students participate in the operation (administration) of university co-ops. Students themselves are the key component in co-op operation. About a 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.

Second, students interact with faculty members and others through their participation. The Board of Directors discusses matters democratically, with no distinctions drawn between students, faculty, and full-time co-op staff. Third, students participate in product and 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 are made to improve stores.

Fourth, students frequently use "opinion cards" to improve and let know university co-ops. Opinion cards are not used solely for processing complaints and soliciting requests, but 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 the strength of democratic 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 in order to prevent global economy disruption.

It has become increasingly important in this context that co-operatives, as not-profit enterprises, expand their businesses. The United Nations declared 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives. Japan's co-ops reconsidered their own approaches and sought to improve them, and university co-ops took on an active role within the Japan Joint Committee of Co-operatives.

Role of University Co-ops in Democratization of Universities and Society

The role of universities is to produce sovereign citizens and especially their 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 which have been brought together in the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union (JCCU). Through these activities, Japan's university co-ops have produced independent and creative sovereign citizens who have become more and more 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.

Workshops were continually held in Indonesia in 2010, in the Philippines in 2011, in Malaysia in 2012 and in South Korea in 2013. We will try to 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 and Universities' 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 and public universities in order to cut government expenditures on universities.

Accordingly, national and 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 and 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.

They will contribute to the enrichment of university life through the cooperation of undergraduates, graduates, international students and faculty. They will collaborate as a learning community with universities in realization of their philosophies and goals, as well as contribute to the enrichment of higher education and advancement of research.

They 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. They 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 forms. 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 earnestly cooperated in developing university co-ops and improving student services in Asian countries in accordance with their philosophies and activities.

While there have been unfortunate declines 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 that are still doing well. They have also collaborated with the National Association of College Stores (NACS).

In Europe, they have maintained exchange with DSW in Germany, CNOUS in France and a variety of other student services organizations. They earnestly hope that the 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.

II Expanding Asian-Type Student Services all over the World

The Meaning of the Asian Student Co-op Conference

In July, 2011, an Asian student cooperative conference was held at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, the Philippines. For two days, under the theme of “Converging, Cooperating, Creating New Paradigm,” co-operative people discussed ideas and learned from each other about the significance of student support and students’ participation in co-op activities at higher educational institutions. The following are some of the things we can learn from such experiences.

Student Support is One of the Pillars of Universities

At UNESCO’s International Conference (Paris, 2009), a request was made to the supporting nations to “ensure active student participation in academic life” and for them to “provide adequate student services”.

In Europe, the Bologna Process has been promoting standardization of higher education, and it is leading to strengthened preparations by which exchange students can be accepted, not only from the European nations but throughout the world.

The importance of student support, along with education and research, has come to be recognized as one of the three pillar services that universities must provide.

What Are Student Support and Services?

Then, what are student support and services?

Student support refers to the university or society's providing of facilities or expenditures to promote students' living, meals, study and research.

Because universities are universal educational institutions, they must be able to secure domiciles, meals and scholarships for the students who come there from all over the world. For this reason, it is necessary to build, maintain and manage student dormitories, dining facilities, university shops and such, and put in place measures for scholarship systems.

These student support services, when viewed from a worldwide

perspective, have adopted three main models. These are the market economy type, the publicly funded type and the co-operative type.

Student Support and Services in the US and Europe

The market economy model is the type used in the United States. In the US, the universities themselves build and operate student dormitories, set up and operate dining halls, mediate numerous scholarships and arrange for students' studies and research. On the other hand, in the majority of cases, the bookstores are subcontracted to and operated by outside vendors.

The publicly funded model is the type used in France, Germany and some other European nations. Even now in many European countries, university tuition costs are free or nearly free, with the national governments ensuring university education. Student support services are provided by a government organization as is the case with CNOUS in France, or by quasi-government organizations such as DSW in Germany, with student dormitories, dining halls and scholarships coming under their collective management and operation. These aspects have also been sought for standardization in the Bologna Process.

Student Support and Services in Asia

The third model is the co-op type of student support and services. This is the formula that has been adopted mainly in Japan and other Asian nations.

In Japan, since the period of recovery following the end of World War II, university co-ops have a long history of undertaking welfare enterprises on campuses. At a majority of Japan's national universities, at one-half of public universities and at some 20 percent of private universities (including Keio, Waseda and other major private universities), university co-ops are engaged in welfare enterprises.

In Asia, since the end of World War II, co-ops have been nurtured in many countries, and these have also been developed at universities and other educational institutions.

With regard to student support and services by universities, in Asia, co-op type enterprises, which are neither the American market economy type nor the European publicly funded type, have been becoming the mainstay.

What are Co-ops?

Then, what are co-ops?

Co-ops originated around the mid-19th century when workers, farmers and consumers, who were in difficult straits under businesses driven by the profit motive, engaged in activities to pool their capital resources and operate their own enterprises to preserve their livelihoods.

Their philosophy was self-help and joint-help between fellow members---in other words, cooperation.

Afterwards, the philosophy and organization of co-ops spread around the world, and the ICA---the International Co-operative Alliance, formed in 1895---currently encompasses some one billion people in ninety-two countries, making it the world's largest NGO.

Co-ops among producers include those involved in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and others. Related to finance, they include credit unions and credit associations aimed at small-and-medium-sized businesses. Among insurers, they include mutual aid associations for farmers and workers and such. In localities apart from urban areas, co-ops supply electricity and other forms of energy, as well as provide medical treatment.

Features of Co-ops

As co-ops for consumers, there exist purchase co-ops engaging in store enterprises and delivery businesses on a local basis or at the workplace. University co-ops belong to these organizations.

Co-ops are characterized by gatherings of consumers, who pool fiscal resources and become members. They advance funds as capital to procure merchandise, which are purchased by the members. The realized profits are fed back to the members.

The board of directors that serves as the main body for operations is chosen by the members. The members are investors, users, and also operators.

Providing Products, Services and Support for a Variety of Campus Activities

Then, what are the merits of university co-ops?

There are several major advantages in adopting the co-op system to university welfare enterprises.

First is the co-ops' ability to provide the selection of merchandise or services that conforms closely to users' needs. Universities differ from general markets. It is necessary for them to provide textbooks or specialized books required for study and research, as well as a variety of other study materials. Moreover, at universities, busy and off-periods of operating times and days of operations can vary according to the academic schedule, and such, making it necessary to have stable operation in accordance with user needs.

Second is their ability to support a variety of activities on campus. Co-ops not only reinforce strong ties in terms of their economic aspects, but also reinforce mutual ties between fellow members. At the beginning of a new academic period, they provide a forum where the upper-class students can greet the new ones, address their concerns following matriculation, and forge friendships. Via the specialized nature of the university, recycling and reuse can be adopted to deal with the environment problem, and co-ops can also provide support by expanding career avenues after graduation.

Collaboration with Universities and Tie-ups among Co-operative Organizations

The third advantage is that understanding and collaborative relations with the university are strengthened. Japan's university co-ops, which engage in enterprises on behalf of the universities, are provided with land or building space from the institutions free of charge. The profits generated from the enterprises, in addition to maintaining the dining halls and shop facilities, are utilized for campus environment maintenance and beautification, and in some cases portions of the profits are also made available for scholarships. Since co-ops are non-profit organizations, the surpluses can be directly or indirectly reimbursed to the members or universities.

The fourth advantage is that tie-ups can be formed among co-ops. In terms of business, forming joint business federations among university co-ops enables lower prices and expenditures for procurements and distribution. This is a benefit not only for business, but for all activities, because they share common problems including the relationships with the universities or students, and thus leading-edge solutions to problems can be disseminated,

or a social problem, that a single university co-op cannot resolve on its own, can be resolved through the nationwide federation.

University Co-ops in Nurturing 21st Century Sovereign Citizens

In addition to the points I have already mentioned, university co-ops are playing another important role---that of nurturing 21st century sovereign citizens.

As university education is becoming propagated around the world and globalization is progressing, universities are being entrusted with the major task of nurturing sovereign citizens who have the ability to develop their own societies and assume responsibility for them as well as to take on job responsibilities no matter where they go.

University co-ops continue their collaboration with universities, and in this manner are cooperating in the nurturing of new sovereign citizens. The ability to conduct enterprise of a co-op, and the ability to build human relationships for that purpose, as well as the ability to engage in communications with numerous people---including exchange students and others---will be among the necessary conditions for new sovereign citizens in the 21st century.

Co-ops are Enterprises of Sovereigns

As transition to democratic society progresses throughout the world, it is important for sovereign people not only to improve their own nations through better governments, but also to expand enterprises in which they can engage as sovereigns. Co-ops, unlike large corporations or small-and-medium-size businesses, are enterprises operated by ordinary people who do not seek to earn profits.

In the history of co-ops at Japan's universities since the end of World War II, co-ops have led the way, not only by setting good examples, but also by nurturing many co-op activists and entrepreneurs. I hope many people in Asia may become aware of this history. By studying the example of Japan, I would like to see them develop co-ops well matched to their own respective countries and societies.

The key for achieving this aim is the fact that the overwhelming majority of university co-op members are students, and Japan's university co-ops are

operated primarily by the students. I would like all the university co-op people to bear this in mind.

2012: the International Year of Cooperatives

The year 2012 was designated by the United Nations as the International Year of Cooperatives. In Japan, a draft of the Co-op Charter was adopted in January, 2012.

The draft Charter calls for co-ops' new roles in the midst of progress by the world's democratic societies. It not only urges governments to seek the establishment of co-op policies, but appeals to the various types of co-ops to carry out self-reform through review of their own situations. University co-ops have been playing a major role in drawing up this Co-op Charter draft.

Japan's co-ops are endeavoring to maintain the process of self-review and self-reform, in order to take up the roles prescribed in the draft. In this sense as well, university co-ops play a significant role. In this context as well, I would like all the Asian university people to think about the ways how co-ops should exist in their own respective countries, paying attention to the fact that students form the nucleus of Japan's university co-ops.

The ICA Asia-Pacific University/Campus Co-operative Committee

The ICA Asia-Pacific University/Campus Co-operative Committee was launched in 1994. At present, there are nine member nations---India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The committee, while taking up measures to promote and expand university campus co-ops in the Asia and Pacific region, also seeks the fulfillment of campus life through student growth and their participation in co-ops.

The university people in the Asia and Pacific region are expected to take up measures for creation of co-ops with numerous possibilities, and I would like to convey the support of all members of the ICA Asia-Pacific University/Campus Co-operative Committee.

III Japanese-Type Student Support in our Democratizing World

Situations of Stricken and Damaged Areas and Tasks for Reconstruction

In 2011, we had terrible earthquakes, tsunamis and the world's worst nuclear power plant accident in Japan. I made three visits to the stricken and damaged areas and saw many places which we may have to preserve as the ruined sites like Pompeii.

But we have to survive and to do so we have to reconstruct the regions so that the residents will be safer and better able to recover, even if they should have another greater earthquake and tsunami. The local and national governments have been discussing this, but it is not easy to get consensus.

In connection with this, I have been hoping that they will find the best mix of agents to reconstruct regional societies.

Best Mix of Agents and the Roles of Various Co-operatives

In a civil society, there are four major agents that function to reconstruct itself repeatedly: a national and many local governments, big enterprises including multinational corporations, middle-and-small-sized enterprises, and non-governmental and non-profit organizations represented by cooperatives.

I strongly hope that the national and local governments will create the best mixes of agents, especially by making use of cooperatives as ordinary people's enterprises. In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to express my honest views on the features and challenges of Japanese-style student support.

The Meaning and Problems of Japanese-Type Student Support

Through my experiences for several years as president of the University Co-operative Associations, I've come to have a better understanding of the features of Japanese-type student support fostered by the activities such as international exchanges.

In some respects, the Japanese-style student support is something we should be proud of, but it also has some serious problems. Those problems are closely related to Japan's role in the world today, and particularly to issues concerning the Japanese youth.

I'd like to express my sincere views on these problems and make these views my own *problematique* for the international decade of co-operatives.

Universities around the World and the Meaning of Student Support

There are currently some 18,000 universities in the world, and, roughly speaking, there are approximately ten-thousand times as many students as the number of universities.

Just as the term indicates, since universities are universal educational institutions, they must accept students from anywhere in the world to provide them with study and research environments. Student support, which provides students with psychological support as well as financial assistance to cover the costs of housing in and out of the university, food and study, is one of the important roles of universities.

Hence, at the international conference held in 2009, UNESCO made the right decision, to include student support as one of the three major responsibilities of universities and governments, along with education and research.

US-Type Student Support

As I have pointed out above, these student support services, when viewed from a worldwide perspective, have adopted three main models.

The first model is the market economy type, and the typical locus for this type is the United States. In the US, universities themselves build and operate student dormitories, set up and operate dining halls, mediate numerous scholarships, and arrange for students' studies.

Reflecting the social condition of a country where psychoanalysis is popular, excellent mental healthcare is also provided. In addition to financial aid provided by the federal and state governments, there are many private foundations in the US. In this way, students can manage university life despite high tuition costs, and foreign students also benefit from the system.

European-Type Student Support

The second model is the publicly funded type, and the typical locus for it is Europe, mainly France and Germany. In France and Germany, the government and quasi-government organizations provide student

dormitories, dining halls, and scholarships under their collective management and operation, and students themselves also are involved in the operation of those organizations.

Such systems in these countries are said to have been gradually established over their long history. Given that university tuition in these countries was and is even now nearly free, this is a very enviable situation for us.

Japanese-Type Student Support

The third model is the co-operative type, which has been rapidly developed in Japan since the end of World War II.

In postwar Japan, scholarships have been provided by the current Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), and they are now much more likely to be scholarship loans, rather than grants, as a rule. Moreover, after the war, although universities had the intention of building more dormitories in addition to the existing ones, construction was not promoted very much, due to concerns such as that dormitories might be used as a base for student movements.

In such situations, students themselves established co-ops to provide dining halls, books, stationary, PCs, housing, employment assistance, various consulting, arrangements for tourism, language training programs, and even scholarships (albeit in small amounts). In a sense, students themselves have provided student support services in Japan.

Historical Context and Significance Today

Although co-operative type student support has been developed in Japan under necessity in a historical context, there is a greater significance today. And this even has a global significance, which is continuously increasing in the 21st century as the transition to democratic society progresses in an increasing number of countries.

As a part of postwar reforms, democracy on the basis of universal voting rights was introduced in Japan and it has been gradually established over a period of more than 60 years. The co-operative type student support is in line with democracy and will contribute to further development.

Although student movements were actively conducted in postwar Japan

under the influence of Marxism, they have declined with the establishment of an “affluent society” and democracy since the 1970’s. However, university co-ops have been continuously developed as student support projects among students and teachers, and they have grown to embrace 220 associations, with a total membership of around 1.54 million.

Trend toward Transition to Democratic Society throughout the World

The world has made progress in the democratization of developing countries and former communist countries, while Japan has been promoting the establishment of democracy, and nowadays even Middle Eastern countries cannot go against the trend toward democratization. The move has been affecting even China and Vietnam, where the Reform and Open-Door policy or Doi Moi reform program have been promoted while maintaining the socialist political system.

In a general trend, an increasing number of countries in the world have developed democratic societies on the basis of universal voting rights, and the sovereign people themselves determine by their own will what their society is and shall be. It is difficult to go against the world trend toward the transition to democratic society.

Economic Activities Supporting Democratic Society

As the transition to democratic society progresses throughout the world, questions about the ways that economic activities should be conducted pose a problem. Democratic society, or actually civil society, has been supported mainly by giant corporations with large capital, medium-and-small-sized companies with moderate and small amounts of capital, and government economic policies and operations.

The governments of the democratized countries should work together to overcome the world economic crisis caused by the financial crisis, that was triggered by the globalized multi-national corporations. On the other hand, as long as the medium-and-small-sized companies provide resources and services required for the improvement of the lives of people and take inventive approaches to pave the way for technological and other innovations, they must be encouraged.

The Meaning of Co-ops and The International Decade of Cooperatives

Along with these enterprises, however, those operated by poorly resourced ordinary people, using the money they pool, become increasingly important and should be encouraged. According to the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), co-ops are the world's largest NGO and are joined by approximately one billion people around the world. Co-ops provide 100 million jobs around the world; 20% more than multinational corporations.

In response to requests from ICA and other organizations, the United Nations declared 2012 to be the International Year of Cooperatives and various efforts were undertaken in each country. Based on the results, ICA, at its extraordinary general assembly in Manchester, UK, in October the same year, decided the ten years 2011-2020 to be a Co-operative Decade so that co-operatives of all over the world should continue various efforts in order to show their superiority in terms of people's participation and resilience on that account against any economic crises.

University Co-ops as Roots of Co-op Activities in Japan

University Co-ops are among the roots of the activities of co-ops in Japan. As such, university co-ops have been engaged in student support at a majority of Japan's national universities, at one-half of public universities, and at some 20 percent of private universities, and also have provided regional co-ops under the umbrella of Japanese Consumer's Cooperative Union with many human resources available to contribute to co-op activities in Japan.

In that sense, Japanese university co-ops have contributed not only to the democratization of Japanese society but also to the development of activities of co-ops supporting the Japanese democratic society. Through those activities, university co-ops have worked on nurturing of 21st century sovereigns who support the Japanese democratic society.

Activities of University Co-ops: Cooperation and Collaboration

Japanese university co-ops can make a significant contribution to transition to the democratic society in Japan and throughout the world, if they become aware of such history and positively define and fulfill their role.

First, Japanese university co-ops teach students that they should

cooperate to support the foundation of their university lives on their own activities. Second, Japanese university co-ops teach students that they should collaborate with their universities to contribute to the improvement and development of higher education in Japan.

Activities of University Co-ops: Independence and Participation, Nurturing of 21st Century Sovereign Citizens

Third, Japanese university co-ops teach students to become independent and to grow up to be sovereigns who can contribute to Japanese society and the global community through the aforementioned activities. Fourth, Japanese university co-ops teach students to participate in various other social activities through the participation in co-op activities, contributing to the peace of the world and Japan, the environmental protection, and creation of a society in which every individual can lead a decent and comfortable life.

Through such cooperation, collaboration, independence, and participation, Japanese university co-ops not only encourage students to contribute to the democratization of Japan and the world, but also adopt the co-op system to promote enterprises suited for democratic society.

Current Situation of University Teachers and Co-op Staff

However, at present, not many university teachers in Japan fully understand the aforementioned meaning and role of university co-ops. As I myself have gradually come to understand such a thing in the course of my research as a sociologist while participating in co-op activities, it is not easy to provide understanding of this meaning to many university teachers who have a variety of different research specialties and have various different involvements in co-ops.

On the other hand, many of the co-op staff members who operate the co-op units are busy with daily duties including providing enterprise operation and sound financial management, and it is often the case that they cannot afford taking time to think over the meaning and role of co-ops.

Current Situations of Students: Passive and Unwilling

Moreover, many students only pay their equity investment as a kind of membership fee to use the functions of co-ops at the time of enrollment, use

dining halls and other facilities without thinking much about the history and meaning of co-ops, and receive a refund of their invested equity at the time of graduation.

At present, as the postwar history becomes a distant memory, we rarely look back on the histories of the foundation of university co-ops, let alone of student movements. Many students take it for granted that co-ops are already there for them and just use them in the same way as they use restaurants or convenience stores in general. It is not so easy to make these students aware of the meaning and role of co-ops.

Promoting Awareness among University Staff and Co-op Staff

So, what should we do?

To begin with, I am encouraging university teachers who are involved in co-ops to understand the meaning and role of university co-ops and tell students about them. As some university staff members are enthusiastic about co-ops, I am also encouraging them to do the same.

In parallel with these efforts, I am also encouraging co-op staff to take time from their busy work schedule to learn about the meaning and role of university co-ops and promote discussions among teachers and students regarding the meaning and role of university co-ops and co-ops in general. The most important thing, however, is that students themselves more become aware of them.

Who is to Be Blamed for the Passive Attitudes of Students?

In Japan's aging society with its falling birthrate, students today are not as lively as those in the past used to be, and many now take passive attitudes toward overseas activities and the reform of Japanese society. This is due to the fact that Japanese society has not clearly presented a path to follow in the midst of ongoing globalization, and I feel responsible for that.

As the transition to democratic society progresses throughout the world, I feel we should actively indicate the role that Japan could and should play. My social theory related to the transition to democratic society throughout the world and my activities regarding university co-ops stem from such intention.

Students and Young People Show their True Strengths in a Showdown

I am now considering whether it is possible to write a book, which deals with the transition to democratic society throughout the world and the role of university co-ops in the midst of the transition. This book could be understood easily by students and could lead to promoting discussions about this among them.

In the past, communications through the co-op's "one-word comment card" spread among students, producing a bestseller. In today's world, the activities of young people via the Internet have led to the collapse of dictatorships in the Middle East. Moreover, demonstrations by young people, criticizing the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor, began in the US and have been spreading throughout the world. Actions taken by young people are the key to these matters. University co-ops in Japan as a whole could operate in the context of such global transition.

University Co-ops in Asia

So, here let me turn to the situation in Asia.

As far as I know, student-driven co-ops that were just like Japanese university co-ops were established in Thailand in the period between the 1950's and the 60's, as well as in South Korea in the late 1980's immediately after its democratization. In Indonesia, some student-driven co-ops are operated even now.

However, the co-ops operated now in Asian countries other than Japan, are mainly teacher-and-staff-driven organizations, and the prevailing situation is one in which students must use dining halls and other facilities, and dividends are allocated among teachers and staff members.

Although economic growth has begun in these countries after the end of developmental dictatorship, university co-ops have not been much developed as the result of the growth-oriented economic policy led by large enterprises. In that regard, it is significant that Japanese university co-ops have been developed through the postwar economic growth to the extent that they have achieved today.

The Meaning of Competition among Asian, US and European Types

Through exchanges with Asian countries, I would like to promote efforts to

establish the co-operative type of student support in other countries, by gaining their understanding of the meaning and role of the Japanese-type in democratizing societies of the 21st Century.

In regard to a comparison with the market economy type in the US, since there are still some university co-ops in the US, university co-ops may again become active when the US loses the dominant position in the world economy and faces increasing problems concerning providing students with support for higher education.

In regard to a comparison with the publicly funded type in Europe, the European type is said to have been gradually developed to become what it is today, through the influence of various student movements. I would therefore like to deepen the discussion, through interaction with those countries, as to whether the European type is to become the future version of the Japanese type.

I would also like to consider the unique future of the co-operative type of student support in Japan.

Showing Appreciation for the History and Thought of Germany

Finally, I would like to send some messages especially to the people of Germany. As a Japanese sociologist, I have learned a great deal from German philosophy, social thought, and sociology. I believe this is the same for not only other sociologists but also many of other Japanese scholars in human and social sciences.

In order to show my appreciation for this and with regard to the theme of this paper, I would like to mention the names of two great figures.

One is Eduard Bernstein. He went into exile in England and studied about British socialism under Friedrich Engels. Back in Germany, he criticized the fact, that the Social Democratic Party of Germany was still hidebound by old Marxian theory, and appealed to improve the ethics of workers by facing up to the reality. However, his appeal was not accepted. While he was criticized and treated as a revisionist, the Second International collapsed just before World War I and, after it, Germany came under the Nazi's rule.

The Best Way to Provide Student Support May be through Co-operatives

The other is Ferdinand Tönnies. He published *Gemeinschaft und*

Gesellschaft” in 1887 and became known as a sociologist who insisted that modern society had to be shifted from community-oriented to profit-oriented. He then studied British social theory and society and, in the 20th century, he suggested *Genossenschaft* as a new direction to set up a future type of society beyond profit-oriented *Gesellschaft*.

Genossenschaft is, in English, a cooperative; in other words a co-op. Sometimes it takes several decades for new thoughts and methods of implementation to be understood. Therefore, I would like to conclude by saying that we must never give up our efforts, including in the search to find the best way to provide student support services.

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