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## Policy and gender inequity in Japanese higher education

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In Japan, there is currently a severe lack of women in leadership and power positions at a number of levels. This is not only detrimental to the hard-working women who truly deserve to be recognized for their skills and abilities, but is also no longer acceptable in today's global society in which diversity and equity are paramount. Although it has slightly improved from 2019 when it was ranked 121st out of 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2019) Japan is currently placed 120th out of 156, making it the worst-ranking G7 country (World Economic Forum, 2021). With regards to female political representation, Japan was the lowest ranking G20 country in 2018 (Gender Imbalance: Japan's Political Representation by Women Lowest in G20, 2019) and is currently ranked 166th out of 193 countries worldwide, with only 9.9% of lawmakers being female as of August 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2020). If Japan is serious about combating such poor rankings and gender inequity, then better policy implementation, starting with the Japanese government itself, needs to take place. Gender barriers and discrimination against women in work environments should be addressed so that females are equally represented in leadership and have the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight and create awareness of the failure of descriptive, regulatory (Arafeh, 2014) gender policies, and discuss the commonly known "30% by 2020" target while drawing attention to sexism and gender barriers within higher education in Japan. Descriptive policies outline particular issues in detail that a policy sets out to address whereas regulatory policies attempt to curtail the behaviour of organizations or individuals often to promote public good (Arafeh, 2014). The gender policies, while descriptive, have done very little to curtail the misogyny women are confronted with in regards to both in work environments and society as a whole. While numerous gender policies including the "30% by 2020"

target were enacted by the Japanese government to increase female leaders in various facets of employment, they did not succeed and will thus be critically evaluated. The university sector and its lack of gender parity will be explored as an example of policy and target failure.

The chapter starts with an overview of gender equality and policy in Japan, reviews literature with regards to higher education and gender barriers, and then examines one private university, X University, as a case study. The case study critically examines the university's disregard of the government's gender target and explores how it continues to ignore existing institutional barriers that prevent the empowerment and promotion of female academics into leadership positions within the institution. The chapter concludes with suggestions on how to address the rampant sexism and gender barriers that exist within the patriarchal system that plagues academia in Japan.

### **Gender policy history**

Japan is viewed as one of the most masculine societies in the world, where career women struggle to gain ground (Hofstede Insights, n.d) and women are less likely to achieve positions of power and/or leadership (Northouse, 2018). Policy actors and makers in Japan are, for the most part, male. This is reflected in the make-up of the Japanese central government itself, where currently only 10% of ministers are female, there has never been a female Prime Minister, and is ranked 147th out of 156 for female political empowerment for all facets of politics in Japan (World Economic Forum, 2021).

In 1994, the Headquarters for the “Promotion of Gender Equality” was created, and in 1999, the Japanese government created the “Basic Act for Gender Equal Society”, their first gender policy. This was created to clarify the “basic concepts pertaining to formation of a gender-equal society” (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016b) while outlining the direction that should be taken to promote a gender-equal society (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016b). This was enacted in 2000 and followed up with the updated “Second Basic Plan” in 2005 that addressed violence against women (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2002). ‘The Third Basic Plan’ followed in 2011, with a focus on continued employment and re-employment (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2013), with the “Fourth Basic Plan” in 2016, emphases are placed on reforming labor practises (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2019). A scheduled fifth plan is expected to be released in

2021, following a pattern of policy review every five years (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2019). Although the target of 30% of leadership positions being filled by females by 2020 was created in 2003, it was not part of the first policy.

### **A society where women can shine**

In 2013, while attempting to promote gender equality, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo gave a speech known as the “Women can shine” speech. In this talk Abe promoted gendered norms and sexist divisions of labour by putting the burden of domestic labour at the feet of women. He suggested that Japan needs to address gender issues to create a society in which women can better balance child care, nursing care (for elderly family members) and work" (Abe, 2014). Rather than explore the gender barriers women face in employment and ignoring the fact that 70% of Japanese women leave the workforce after getting married or having their first child (Villa, 2019), Abe instead suggested that Japan needs more gender balance, not because women deserve to have the same opportunities as their male counterparts, but because women should be able to better balance domestic labour *and* paid labour.

In 2014, only 3.3% of the Japanese national government managerial positions were made up of women (OECD, 2015), while the world average for cabinet positions for women was 20% (World Bank Group in OECD, 2014) making Japan the second worst ranking country of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations with regards to women ministers in national government (OECD, 2014). There is a clear lack of female policy makers and voices within the Japanese government. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that created the 1999 “Basic Act for Gender Equal Society” ignored their own policy when Prime Minister Abe himself removed one of two female cabinet ministers in 2014 (Harding, 2018). In 2015, his party created “The Fourth Basic Plan for Gender Equality” (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2017) but rather than aim for improvement, Abe and his government lowered their own target for governmental participation of females from 30% to 7% for national public servants and from 30% to 15% for local government and private companies (Aoki, 2015). In terms of leadership and gender, the Japanese government itself was unable to meet the very targets they themselves created and foisted onto institutions and companies. The failure of the government to address their own shortcomings within their political ranks is problematic.

In 2016, the “Education and Research” subcategory was created within the “Expansion of “Women’s Participation in Policy and Decision-making Process in

All Fields in Society” already outlined in “The Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality” with clear intentions to increase female university professors (including presidents, vice presidents, professors, associate professors, and lecturers) to 30% by 2020 (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016a). The policy known as “Expansion of Women’s Participation in Policy and Decision-making Processes in All Fields in Society” states:

Target of "30% by 2020" - With the aim of achieving the target of "increasing the share of women in leadership positions to at least 30% by 2020 in all fields in society" ("the target of 30% by 2020"), numerical targets for women's participation were set in the Third Basic Plan for Gender Equality for a wide range of fields, including politics, national and local civil services, private sector, education and research (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016a).

In July of 2020, the LDP, still led by Abe, abandoned their 30% by 2020 policy target (Japan to give up raising women's share of leadership to 30% by 2020, 2020) when it became clear that the target was impossible to achieve. As of print, the government suggested it will adopt a new plan that aims at no gender bias by 2030 and that the 30% target should be achieved “as early as possible” (Japanese delays gender-equality in new five-year plan, 2020). However, little has been released with regards to how the government will attempt to achieve this target or what the “The Fifth Basic Plan” will entail.

### **Criticism of the government and gender target**

Women in Japan are viewed as cheap labour, and mothers who rejoin the work most often work part-time in unskilled, insecure, and low-paying positions (Nemoto, 2016). As Gardner (2016) suggests, women are grossly underrepresented in positions of influence in Japan. There is a belief that gender parity isn’t the purpose of the “30% by 2020” target, but that the government, more so under Abe due to his creation of “Womenomics”, a policy based idea that Japan can boost its economy based on more female participation in the labor force (Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, 2021), is more about window dressing to address the consistently poor global gender rankings such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Gender Index rankings and the Global Gender Gap Report from the World Economic Form. There is belief that this is also an attempt to address criticism (Harding, 2018; Kasai, 2018; Lindgren, 2019), more so international criticism (Villa, 2019). Questions have been raised with

regards to policy, the gender target, and the government trying to secure female workers to address the labour shortage and lack of economic growth Japan currently faces (Harding, 2018; Villa, 2019). It is valid to question the actual purpose of this particular policy and whether it was made to actually support women or if it was a method to silence criticism and/or a way to address the labour shortage and increase female work participation in low paying positions and dead-end jobs.

Policy enactment is largely dependent on enforced policy implementation over policy suggestion (Wallace, 1991). The “Do as I say, not as I do” top-down policy approach regarding the “30% by 2020” target is likely to have failed due to lack of enforced implementation, with the LDP having failed to implement the policy themselves with evidence of target failure and the lowering of goals regarding female political party participation. It seems there was little critical thought and discussion given to cultural practises alignment (Pollock & Murakami, 2014), basically the male-centric work culture and environment. Without addressing the in-group male domination, behaviour, and culture, it is impossible to implement policy properly with mere policy suggestions when faced with the sexist gender norms in Japan. Abe stated “that the empowerment of women has become a guiding principle that has driven Japan’s policies” (Abe, 2014), but with so few women in his own cabinet, his government lowering their own participation target, and the July 2020 target withdrawal, one needs to critically analyze what is said and what is written against what is actually being done. The government’s apathy towards their own policy adoption, their failure to promote implementation throughout Japan, and their lack of incentives, guidelines, and support to local governments, schools, and companies has been why there has been little to no action on the part of many. It has been suggested that some policies are not meant to be taken seriously and enactment is mere symbolism to appear sympathetic and appease certain groups (Shulte, 2018).

The criticism that these policies and targets are merely an attempt to address the labour shortage rings true. The government has suggested that it has achieved results by increasing the number of women working, the rise in the employment for women, increasing female managers to 9.9%, and tripling female board members of “listed” companies (with the meaning of “listed” not transparent) (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2019). However, with an established target of 30%, one needs to ask if less than 10% can be considered an achievement. While there has been an increase in the employment rate of females, the vast majority of those women are in part-time positions with little job security and are working at a level below a living wage

(Catalyst, 2020). The Japanese government has been successful in addressing their labour shortages, but has failed at empowering women and promoting them into positions of leadership. These “achievements” do not address the institutional and systemic frameworks favouring men and propelling the careers of men. They do not hold men accountable as fathers, as caregivers to elderly family members, and as adults who can also participate in domestic labour. Japan has the highest wage gap of any OECD country, where women do more than 75% of unpaid labour and care giving (OECD, 2017). 70% of Japanese women quit working once they get married or have a child (Villa, 2019), furthermore, in 2019, only 7.5% of men in the private sector took paternity leave (Japan enacts law making paternity leave more flexible for men, 2021) whereas overall in 2017, less than 3% took paternity leave, and when new fathers take this leave, most take less than a month off (OECD, 2017). While Japan is encouraging fathers to take paternity leave, few take such opportunities due to policy and cultural norms (Japan enacts law making paternity leave more flexible for men, 2021); many men fear being punished with limited promotion possibilities or financial penalties (Pinsker, 2020). LDP’s new and young, Shinjiro Koizumi, was praised by many for taking paternity leave. He took 12 days spread over a month (Shinjiro Koizumi takes 12 days of paternity leave, 2020). In short, women are doing exactly what Abe and the LDP are suggested of wanting; they are better balancing paid employment and domestic labour. They are not, however, shining in leadership positions.

### **Post-secondary institutions and gendered barriers**

Although female university educators are increasing in number, post-secondary institutions in Japan remain heavily male-dominated (Hicks, 2013; Nagatomo & Cook, 2019). Women, despite their high level of education, are not expected to have careers in Japan (Kobayashi, 2011) yet regardless of this expectation, many do decide to embark on a career in academia. Post-secondary female educators face a “bamboo ceiling” and are often based on the bottom rungs of position and status (Kimoto, 2015). Female academics also tend to suffer from higher rates of job dissatisfaction and have higher levels of stress (Kimoto, 2015). They suffer from a lack of role models and mentors, and are more likely to quit than their male counterparts (Nemoto, 2016). Looking at female leadership in educational institutions, only 8.7% of universities in Japan had a female president in 2016, and most of these female presidents were presidents of female-only institutions (Gardner, 2016). As of 2019, 24.8% of all post-secondary educators, titles not given, were female (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2019). 2015 data suggests that

approximately 23% of all tenured researchers and educators were female and 30% of adjunct professors were female (Nagatomo, 2016). This is in contrast to the fact that Japanese women aged 25-34 are more likely than men of the same age to have a post-secondary degree: 67% of women compared to 56% of men (OECD, 2020).

The academic system was designed for men, by men (Bailyn, 2003). Cummings states “The Japanese system is exceptionally sexist, particularly at the point of entry” (2015, p. 238) where universities are seen as having hostile attitudes toward women on campuses (Gardner, 2016). Female educators are confronted with institutional and systemic barriers, harassment, and misogynist working environments (Cummings, 2015) and feel unable to make a difference regarding their lower status due to a lack of self-efficacy to address these issues within their institution(s) (Schleicher, 2015). This results in a cycle of marginalization (Capper & Young, 2014) as women are locked out of leadership and decision-making positions.

Post-secondary employment demographics suggest those in leadership positions, such as full Professors, Deans, Presidents, and Heads of Departments, are male and are the ones in charge of hiring and promotion (Kimoto, 2015). These males are also the policy actors who make and communicate policies within their institution and are in charge of addressing shortcomings, have few female role models nor incentive to address the lack of gender parity within their institution. While they should seek more input from the females (Villa, 2019) with regards to improving work environments for all, it is difficult to suggest this happens based on the status of women in academia. This is evident by the female educators being clustered at the bottom levels of the institution and being overrepresented as adjuncts, as outlined above. While female students outnumber male students, they clearly lack female role models in leadership positions within the ivory towers. This reflects gender role theory (Smith et al., 2013), the prediction of behaviors and attitudes based on one’s gender, and is highly related to male ingroup prejudice and bias towards female academics (Lewis & Sherman, 2003). Without male support and male professors addressing the very obvious gender biases in Japanese academia, there is very little hope for female educators to reach their potential in terms of leadership.

### **Case study: X University**

X University is private university located in an urban area in one of Japan’s largest cities. It’s well regarded in its area due to favorable working conditions and pleasant students. Like most higher education institutions in Japan, however, it is also very



male-dominated in terms of power and leadership. Based on employment numbers supplied by the university with regards to tenured faculty, it is clear that this particular university lacks female educators, more so in leadership and power positions when comparing ratio numbers and sex. This is consistent with research findings of Hicks (2013), Nagatomo and Cook (2019) and the OECD, which lists Japan as the lowest ranking country in the OECD group with regards to higher education and gender balance amongst educators (OECD, 2015). The university's female professors are largely clustered at the bottom as adjunct staff: of 440 employed, 169 are female (X University, 2020). With regards to tenured positions, of the 187 full professors, only 37 are females, of 81 associate professors, only 20 are female; and overall, for tenure, there are only 82 females compared to 259 males with 27 of those females listed as assistant professors or instructors (X University, 2020). While not educator related yet included in the teaching staff and administrative staff demographics webpage, the vast majority of office staff, 130 of the 179 employed full-time by the university, are females (X University, 2020), perhaps included to make it appear that there is some sort of gender balance in employment as including office staff means that the ratio of fulltime employment is a 60:40 ratio which is above the government target of 30%. There is no information given with regards to office staff and management titles. There is not a single female educator as Chair of a Department or a Dean, and all Vice-Presidents and Presidents have been male throughout the universities' history (X University, 2020). All 17 faculties are chaired by men (X University, 2020) and none of the departments have reached the government target of 30% females in positions of leadership. In fact, none of the departments have reached the level of 30% tenured female educators.

The institution, unlike a few other universities in the area, does not have a gender equity/equality office, nor does it have any university committees dedicated to addressing gender disparity. With no committee created to address lack of gender parity, no hiring and promotion policies established, no office to specifically address gender issues for both students and staff, and no attempts to investigate why there is a lack of female faculty, it appears that X University has done little to nothing to address the government policy subcategory "Education and Research" in which post-secondary institutions were expected to increase the number of female professors (including presidents, vice presidents, professors, associate professors, and lecturers) to 30% by 2020 (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office, 2016a).

Literature suggests that female educators discuss the male dominated, and often toxic work environment in universities in Japan (Cummings, 2015; Harshbarger, 2012; Nagatomo, 2015). While X University is known for being far more female-friendly than other institutions in the area, this particular university has also been known to have issues relating to gendered barriers, questionable behaviour from male staff, and practises that affect female educators more than their male counterparts (McCandie, 2021). “Schools are sites of cultural politics that serve both to reproduce and to perpetuate the inequalities inherent in gender, race, and class constructs” (Shields, 2010, p. 569), and X University is replicating and perpetuating a male dominated society, just as the Japanese government has with their male dominated political parties and figureheads.

### **Gender, policy, targets, and support**

The strength of Japan’s gender policy is that it has a clear goal; to empower females so that they can rise into leadership positions by providing more opportunities and creating more equity within employment. Japanese women are amongst the best educated in the world but have not been properly supported in order for them to obtain positions of power and leadership (World Economic Forum, 2019). The 30% target, with support and implementation knowhow, should be obtainable within the next decade if the government is truly serious about increasing female in leadership positions. However, the weaknesses are numerous as the “policy-practise” divide is wide. The divide between macro (the national government) and micro (institutions) regarding gender policy outcome and enactment is highly problematic as we saw with the above case study example. The government has not effectively taken into account social conditions or implementing agencies nor supported interorganizational communication and enforcement of activities, (Schulte, 2018).

There are numerous challenges and constraints faced by females in the university system that are discussed in the plethora of literature on gender and employment at universities in Japan. It is clear that the gender policies created by the government have not done enough thus far to address the sexism female academics are confronted with. Without incentive or punishment, and without mandatory quotas for institutions to meet, the LDP’s gender ratio policy has been ineffective. Gender ratio policies, such as the “30% by 2020” need to be mandatory and include credible threats of punishment (Mensi-Klarbach et al., 2019). If the government is serious about addressing their very obvious lack of female representation in leadership positions, they need to start holding institutions accountable, and that accountability

needs to be made public (Boyd, 1996; Mensi-Klarbach et al., 2019). They also need to promote and recognize the skills and abilities that females possess that are often overlooked in male-centric work environments, in academia namely student pastoral care (Collins, 2020) and teaching (Kimoto, 2015). Currently, there is a lack of responsibility and accountability with regards to creating committees and offices to address gender issues, such as with X University. Systemically embedded mindsets, assumptions, practices, policies, and procedures, which affect female faculty, need to be critically examined with the input of female academics. How female academics are affected by ingroup male dominance in Japan has not been either adequately understood or addressed by those in positions of power.

For universities that are seemingly aware and attempt to be proactive by advertising that they want to hire women, this is not enough. Advertising for female applicants does not address the systematic and institutional barriers that led to the institution being in need of females. Without attempts to dismantle the barriers, small policy changes, and the women hired under such guises, may face a backlash due to attempts at addressing the ingroup hiring of males. Some female academics, for example, have had their credentials questioned by male academics with regards to their hiring (McCandie & Mulvey, 2018), and discussions about reverse sexism and bias against hiring males is not unheard of. This unexpected consequence may occur due to a lack of critical discussion addressing cultural practices, policy alignment (Pollock & Murakami, 2014) and implementation (Skrla et al., 2001) of new targets and policies. Ensuring that women who are hired are not made to feel they were only offered jobs because of their sex needs to be part of the dialogue when it comes to discussing hiring and promotion practices. Without the input of female academics to discuss gender barriers, new policies or targets, such as the advertising for female applicants, can actually have negative consequences to the very same people they are supposed to be helping.

Gendered cultural beliefs also need to be challenged. For career women, the gendered cultural expectations, such as being responsible for domestic duties and childrearing, act as barriers with regards to promotion and better employment opportunities (Cummings, 2015; Holloway, 2010). Institutional and systemic frameworks favour men; late night meetings, heavily-male networking drinking parties, conferences on weekends, and the expectation that someone else is tending to the domestic duties at home. Mothers, who are responsible for the lion's share of childcare in Japan, face even more challenges, and thus intersectionality needs to be

part of the dialogue with regards to supporting female academics. Mothers are expected to both work as if they are childfree and raise children as if they do not have a job. Mothers, regardless of country, pay a “baby penalty” in that they are valued and paid less, are passed over for promotion, or not hired due to the belief that they will not be as competent and dedicated to those who are not mothers (Goncalves, 2019). Societal expectations regarding gender create more employment advantages for males as females feel pressured to decide between a career or a family (Holloway, 2010; Nemoto, 2016). Mothers who rejoin the labour force after child rearing often work in unskilled, insecure, and low-paying positions such as secretaries, waitstaff, or cashiers because of domestic expectations and cultural norms. University offices are full of these women, termed “office ladies,” mainly working for dispatch companies, who are seen as temporary staff and disposable regardless of their education and skills (McCandie & Mulvey, 2018). In the case of university educators, these mothers often become adjunct faculty members, regardless of their skills and qualifications, because adjunct work allows mothers to balance career and motherhood more than a tenured position ever would.

### **Discussion points**

1. Gendered norms are highly ingrained in Japanese work culture. The government needs to not only create policies that support equity for females in the workforce but also need to address working conditions that act as barriers. The belief that long working hours equate to quality and dedication needs to be dismantled so that males are enabled to take part in childrearing and other forms of domestic labour that act as a barrier for women in employment. Japan, as a whole, needs to better promote changes in gendered workplaces and home culture so that women are not bearing the brunt of domestic labor and that fathers are able to spend more time with their children. The Japanese government itself needs to stop suggesting that gender equity at work is needed so women can better balance caregiving and employment (Abe, 2014). The OECD (2020) has suggested that it needs to be made easier for women to (re-)enter regular employment, without age restrictions, and institutions should be encouraging men, more so senior management so they lead by example, to take more time off. How can the government address the gap between culture, gender roles, and empowering females in the workforce, while empowering fathers to participant more in parenting?

2. Childcare cannot be seen as solely a women's issue, and while the government itself is pushing fathers to take paternity leave more often, it has yet to address the issues of bullying, loss of pay, withholding of promotions, and in some cases, demotion, that fathers who have exercised their legal rights to stay home with their children have endured (Pinsker, 2020). As Japan suffers a chronic day-care shortage and while the government has said it will end day-care waitlists, it remains a constant source of stress for mothers who are expected to put their career on hold (Boykoff, 2019). Japan needs to invest more in early childhood education and out-of-school-hours care if women are going to be able to compete in academia (OECD, 2015). Universities should be encouraged to offer onsite daycare but few do. How can the Japanese government entice more institutions to offer onsite childcare and better support for paternity leave?
3. Political interests, often rooted in self-interest, reform culture and internal policy conflict (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014) are not easy for those who have greatly benefited from the status quo. The Japanese government itself, while saying it supports the empowerment of women, has not addressed the issues with ingroup, male-led policy makers and power holders within their own work environment. If the government is unable to address their male privilege and ingroup culture, policy implementation and targets will continue to be unsuccessful. In terms of academia, some men appear to be resentful with regards to the suggestion that they have benefitted from male privilege, similar to addressing white privilege in academia in Western countries (Melaku & Beeman, 2020). What can be done so that both the government and academia are more aware of the issues of privilege and intersectionality with regards to policy reform and empowerment of females?

## **Conclusion**

More needs to be done to support female academics in Japan (Hasegawa, 2015). Policies affect work environments, but many educators lack policy knowledge (Arafeh, 2014) and in the case of Japan, many are overwhelmed and lack motivation to question societal norms and push back on top-down decision making (Hasegawa, 2015). Few males in leadership and power positions seem to want to act as advocates with regards to social justice issues and issues of discrimination. Overall working conditions need to be addressed and opportunities for female educators need to be created to dismantle the institutional power structures that act as gendered gatekeeping. Those in positions of power need to be challenged with regards to their

apathy and privilege towards the issue of lack of female educators. Without a push from outside the power circles, little will change and little has changed under the government even with policy supposedly enacted. Universities are well aware of social injustice but fail to create systems to address it (Nagatomo & Cook, 2019). Although the Japanese government has created a policy and target to address gender imparity, this has not been achieved due to various factors such as lack of solid implementation, underlying gendered cultural beliefs, and lack of clear guidelines and support from the government. There needs to be accountability to attempt to meet said target, more so for the government, and strategies need to be clearly communicated.

For policies to be successful there needs to be clear communication from policy makers to stakeholders, evaluations of the policy, and change monitoring (DeGroff & Cargo, 2009). There also needs to be critical reflection and self-examination with regards to policy and culture (Davies, Popescu, and Gunter, 2011). At the moment, the government appears to have done little to support institutions who are expected to carry out the policy changes they have put forth. Due to the government's poor implementation, lack of direction, incentives, and clarity, universities, such as X University in the present case study, appear to not have even attempted to implement any sort of policy translation or address their gender imparity in a manner that would have promoted women into leadership positions on campus. The government has failed with regards to policy design to address the gendered barriers women face within Japan, more so at the university level.

All institutions that are heavily dominated by a male majority of their country should realise that they are hurting themselves. A lack of diversity, be it gender, race, religion, sexuality, or language, means a lack of creativity and little change. More diversity means more innovation, different opinions, new ideas, and broader problem-solving solutions (Phillips, 2014). Educational institutions, more so universities, should be leading the way when it comes to diversifying their workforce. Until the Japanese government itself examines their gendered beliefs, empowers their own female lawmakers, and addresses the social expectations that care-giving and domestic labour is a woman's job (Holloway, 2010; Nemoto, 2016), policy enactment, translation, and implementation will continue to fail.

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## Abstract

In Japan, there is currently a severe lack of women in leadership and power positions at a number of levels. While the Japanese government has released policies to increase female leaders in various facets of employment, they have not truly been successful in elevating the status of working women in Japan. The university sector and its lack of gender parity will be explored as an example of policy and target failure. This chapter will highlight and create awareness of the failure of gender policies and discuss the commonly known “30% by 2020” target while drawing attention to sexism and gender barriers within higher education in Japan. Included is an overview of gender equality and policy in Japan, a literature review with regards to higher education and gender barriers, and a private university case study. The case study critically examines the university’s disregard of the government’s gender target and explores how it continues to ignore existing barriers that prevent the empowerment and promotion of female academics into leadership positions within the institution. The chapter concludes with suggestions on how to address the rampant gender-based inequity and hurdles that exist within the patriarchal system plaguing academia in Japan.

**Keywords:** Gender, policy, equity, leadership, higher education

